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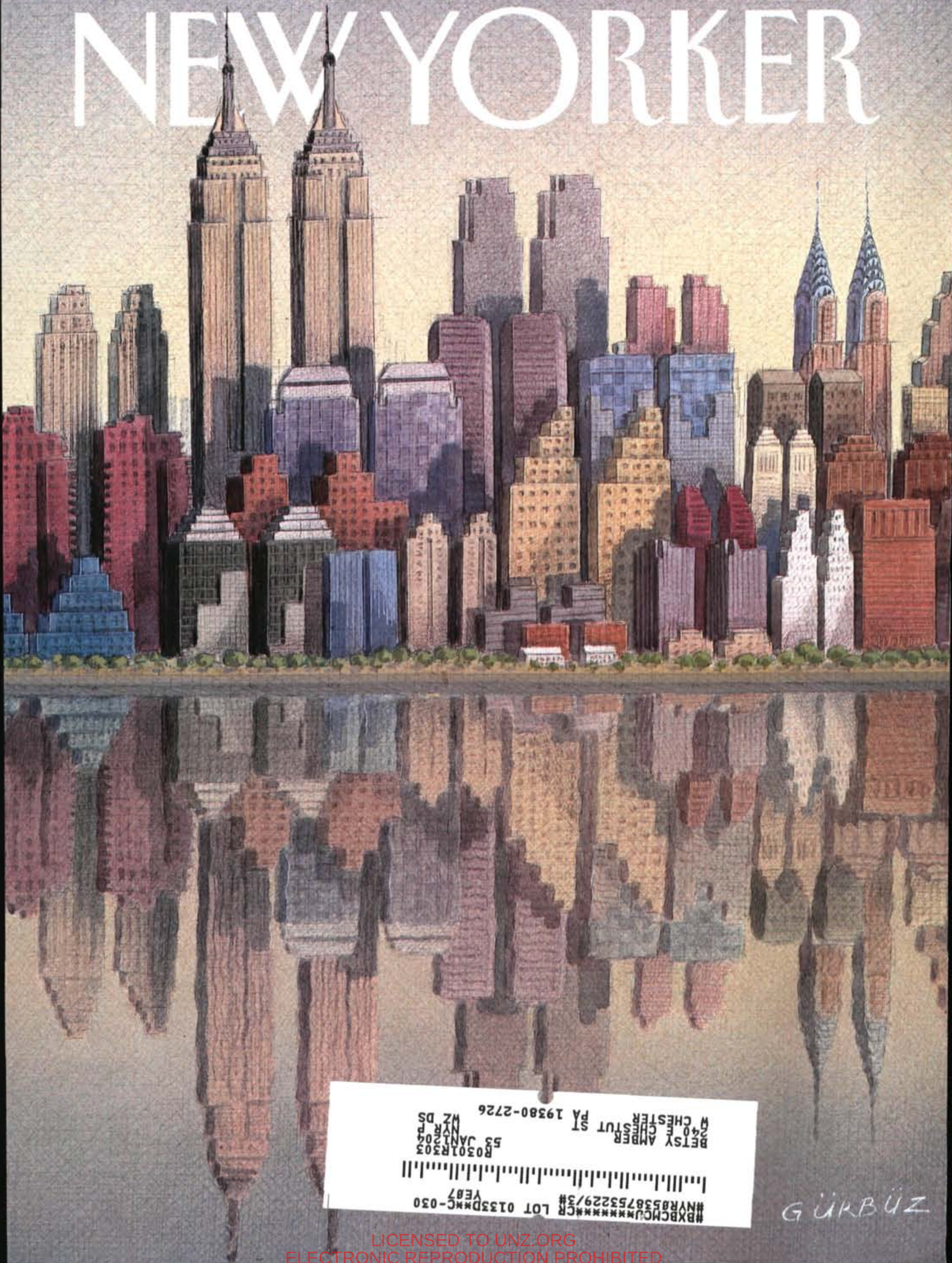
THE NEW YORKER

SEPT. 15, 2003



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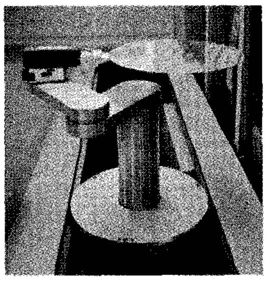
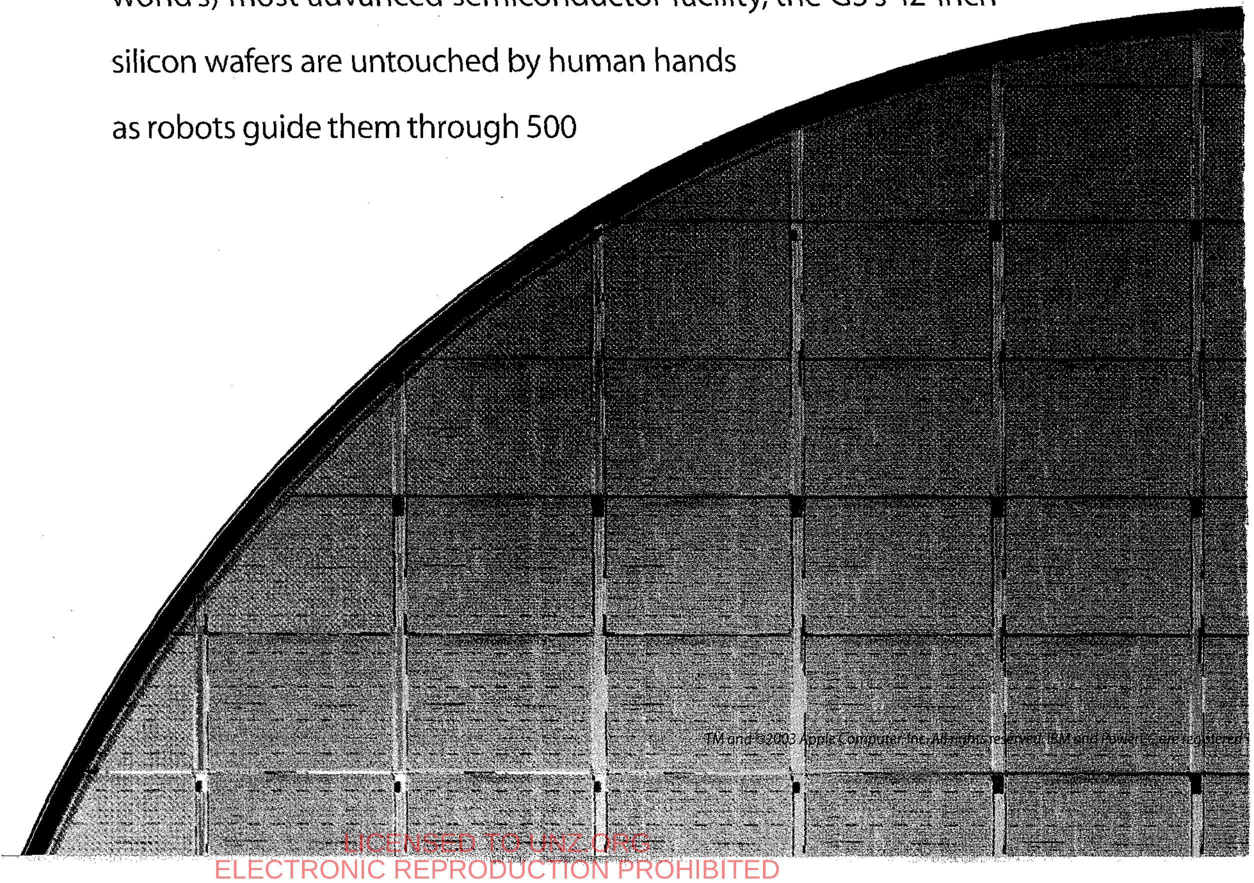
The dawn of a new PC er

For the last decade, every processor chip in every personal computer in the world has been based on 32-bit architecture. It was the best technology we had. Until today. Introducing the revolutionary PowerPC G5 processor, the world's first 64-bit processor for personal computers.



The world's most advanced personal computer chips are manufactured in the world's most advanced semiconductor factory.

Before now, a chip this formidable could only be found in the world's fastest servers and supercomputers. Which is precisely where the G5 chip came from. Developed by IBM and Apple® the G5's DNA is from the core of IBM's highest-performance, 64-bit POWER4 processor. But just as impressive as the G5's pedigree is how it's manufactured. In IBM's (and the world's) most advanced semiconductor facility, the G5's 12-inch silicon wafers are untouched by human hands as robots guide them through 500



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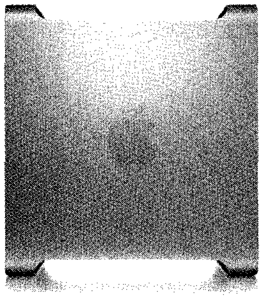
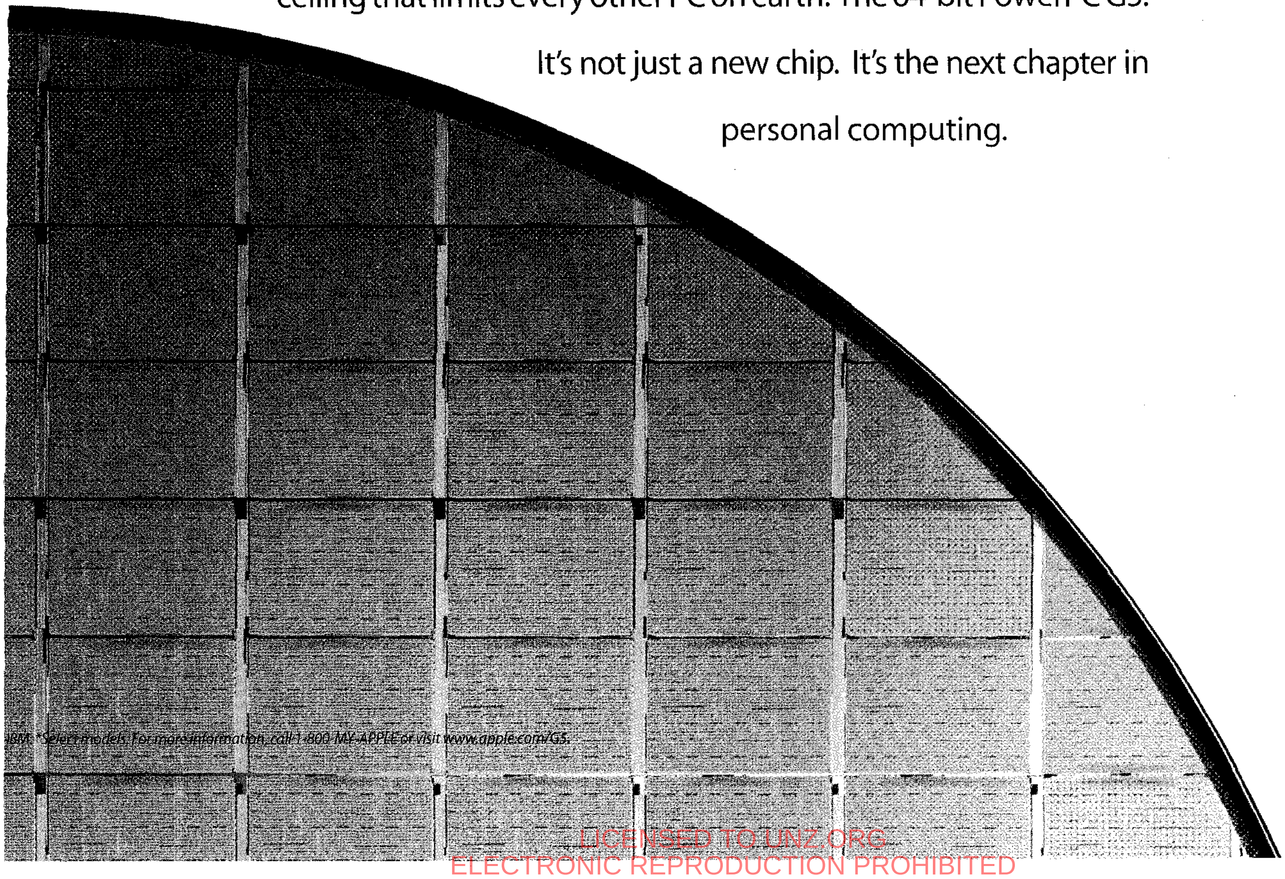
he 64-bit processor.

processing steps, creating 58 million transistors and connecting them with over 1000' of copper wire that's less than 1/800th the width of a human hair.

The new PowerPC G5 has a 1-gigahertz frontside bus* that moves data in and out of the processor almost twice as fast as the competition, removing a key bottleneck that limits performance. And it can support more than 200 in-flight instructions at a time – 71% more than the 32-bit Pentium 4. Perhaps most importantly, the G5's 64-bit architecture can address dramatically more memory – over 4 billion times more than 32-bit chips – so that systems built around the G5 can shatter the 4-gigabyte memory ceiling that limits every other PC on earth. The 64-bit PowerPC G5. It's not just a new chip. It's the next chapter in personal computing.



The world's first 64-bit desktop processor can only be found in one place: Inside the new Power Mac® G5, the world's fastest personal computer.



*BM. *Select models. For more information, call 1-800-MY-APPLE or visit www.apple.com/G5.*

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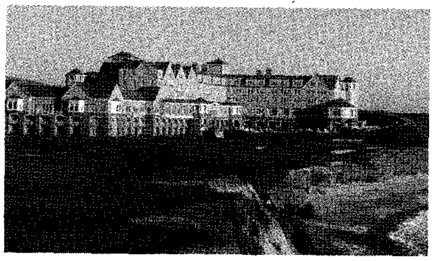

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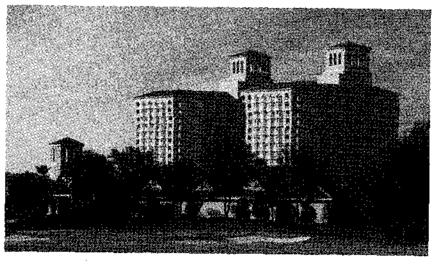

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*Independent lab test assumed replacement of spiral after 800-1,000 cork pulls.

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SEPTEMBER 15, 2003

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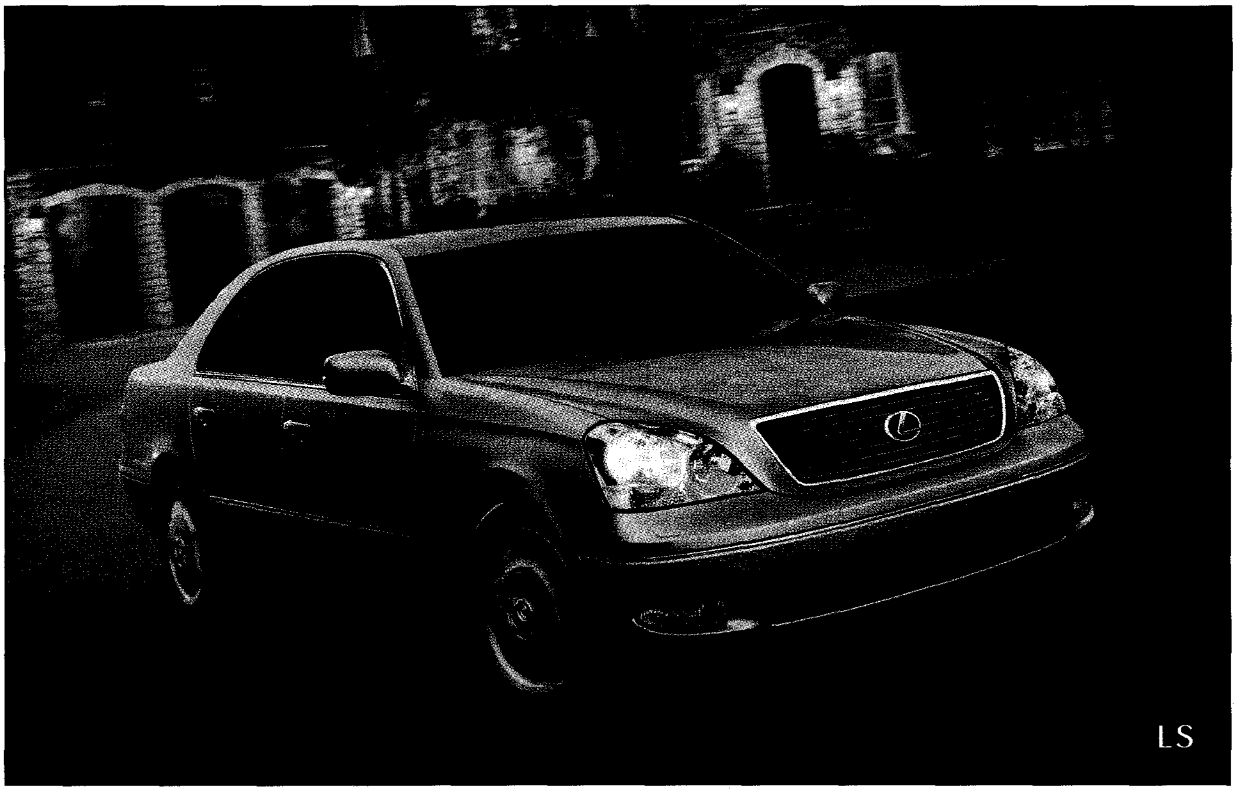

It's not often that the stuff of science finds a home in something this graceful and this luxurious. But that's exactly what the engineers at Lexus have succeeded in doing with Dynamic Laser Cruise Control,* available in the LS.

This impressive system sends out a laser signal from your front bumper to detect a car traveling ahead of you. And helps to automatically reduce your speed to maintain a set following distance. You, in turn, may continue your drive in the spacious, leather-rich cabin, enjoying the 11-speaker Mark Levinson® Premium Audio System.† (While you ponder whether a rich Barolo or a spicy Pinot makes a better complement to the filet mignon planned for later that evening.)

Should the vehicle in front of you turn off the road or change lanes, the system will then resume your pre-set speed. Dynamic Laser Cruise Control is merely one of the multitude of advanced features that distinguish the Lexus LS. As well as a stellar example of how science can help make for better living. Class dismissed.

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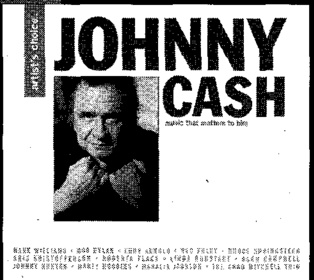

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CONTRIBUTORS

Peter J. Boyer ("The Jesus War," p. 58) has been a staff writer since 1992.

Victor Erofeyev ("Dirty Words," p. 42) is the author of "Russian Beauty," a novel, and the editor of "The Penguin Book of New Russian Writing." He lives in Moscow.

Noah Baumbach (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 49) wrote and directed the film "Kicking and Screaming." He co-wrote, with Wes Anderson, "The Life Aquatic," which is currently shooting in Rome.

John Cassidy (Books, p. 92) is a staff writer. His book "Dot.con" is out in paperback.

Dan Baum ("Jake Leg," p. 50) is the author of "Smoke and Mirrors: The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure" and "Citizen Coors: An American Dynasty."

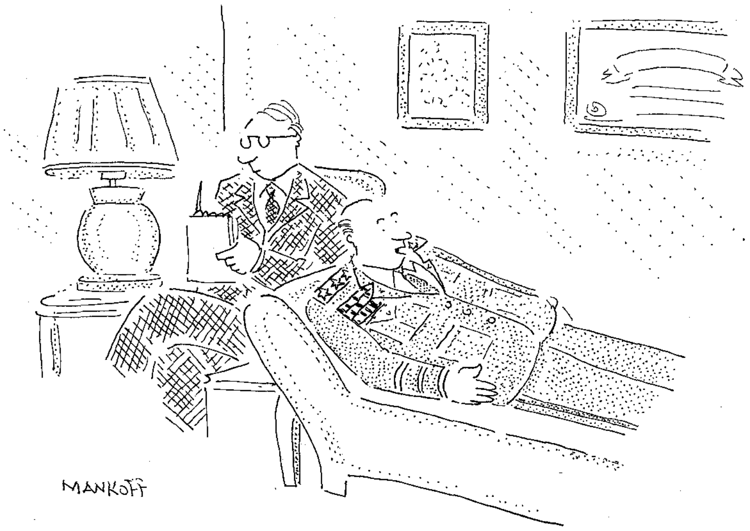
Paul Goldberger ("Urban Warriors," p. 72), the magazine's architecture critic, is working on a book about the rebuilding of Ground Zero.

Tessa Hadley (Fiction, p. 82) has written a book about the fiction of Henry James and a novel, "Accidents in the Home." Her new novel, "Everything Will Be All Right," comes out next month.

Louis Menand (A Critic at Large, p. 88) won the Pulitzer Prize for history last year for "The Metaphysical Club." His latest book is "American Studies."

Deborah Garrison (Poem, p. 68) is the author of "A Working Girl Can't Win and Other Poems."

David Denby (The Current Cinema, p. 100) is a film critic for the magazine. ♦



"Postwar is hell."

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THE MAIL

THE POVERTY OF MARRIAGE

Katherine Boo's intensely humanistic article on an abandoned black community in Oklahoma City throws into question the conservative mantra of "personal responsibility," which has been brandished to great effect in dismantling assistance programs for the poor ("The Marriage Cure," August 18th & 25th). We now see a government cynically pushing "family values" with unrealistic marriage promotions that miss the crux of the problem: that, for many poor women, viable marriage prospects are hard to come by. The remarkable thing is that Kim Henderson and Corean Brothers are willing to listen to the teacher in their government-sponsored marriage class, despite nagging doubts about whether watching instructional videos of white suburban couples bickering over their computers will be of much use. What they are perhaps too proud to admit is that only sustained governmental stewardship can bring these communities back into the American mainstream.

John McCormack
Los Angeles, Calif.

GOLF AND CLASS

Mark Singer's article on the fight over plans for a luxury golf course in Connecticut may leave the impression that this is mostly petty wrangling among nouveau-riche developers and crusty New Englanders ("The Haves and the Haves," August 11th). But, as Singer notes, while two-thirds of the seven-hundred-and-eighty-acre plot is in Norfolk, the rest is in North Canaan. This town, which Singer describes as having "a distinct blue-collar identity," is hardly the sort of "real-deal Wasp preserve" that he finds in Norfolk. Singer writes that the fight has given Norfolk's residents "a chance to affirm their shared values and, in the bargain, to infuse their lives with some otherwise missing drama." For many in the region, however, it's not about drama but about the impact of development, in the form of changes to the wetlands and water quality, commercial expansion, and increased traffic. These repercussions are likely to be at least as considerable as the presumed social effect on Norfolk. And yet, reading Singer's account, one would almost think that a blue-collar town is just not relevant to the debate over the golf club.

Claudia Swan
Evanston, Ill.

INVENTING GROWNUPS

I appreciated Joan Acocella's piece on the ongoing debate over the origin of the concept of childhood in Europe (Books, August 18th & 25th). It is worth mentioning, though, that there are many who believe that it was actually the concept of adulthood that emerged in the late sixteenth century. Most Europeans in the preceding centuries just never grew up. If we look at the paintings of Pieter Bruegel, for example, we see all generations in the streets rolling hoops and playing games together. And even the gentry were illiterate. The printing press and the development of paper, along with Luther's emphasis on reaching salvation through reading the Bible, meant that adults entered a sphere of knowledge not accessible to young children. (Television and the computer may have begun to erase this distinction.) Some of the anecdotes in the article also merit further comment. The Spedale degli Innocenti, in Florence, did offer refuge for foundlings, but a prime purpose was to get those babies baptized before they died. And not all of the babies were sent out to wet nurses. Incidentally, the Spedale building still stands, although the lazy Susan on which infants were left no longer functions.

Dorothy W. Hewes
Professor Emeritus of Child and Family Development, San Diego State University
San Diego, Calif.

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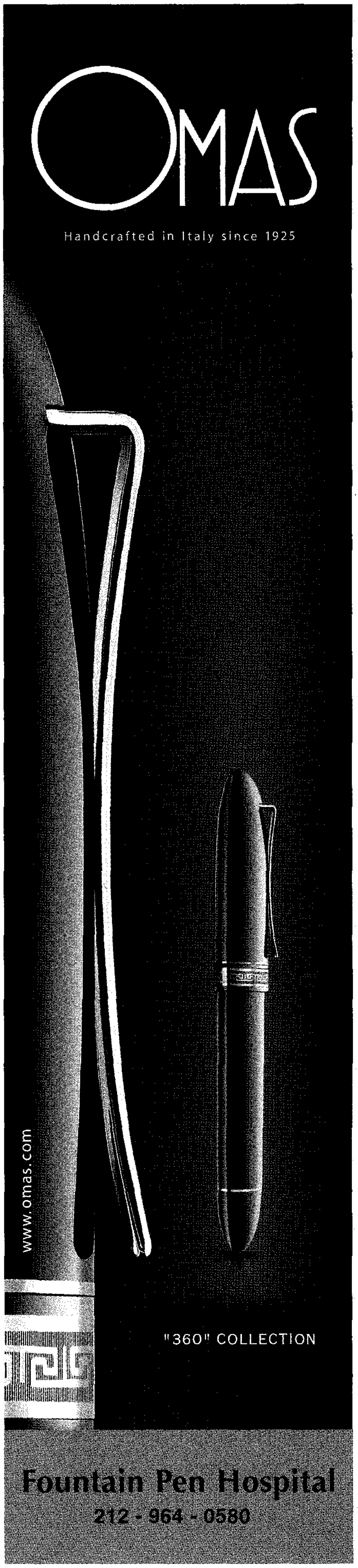

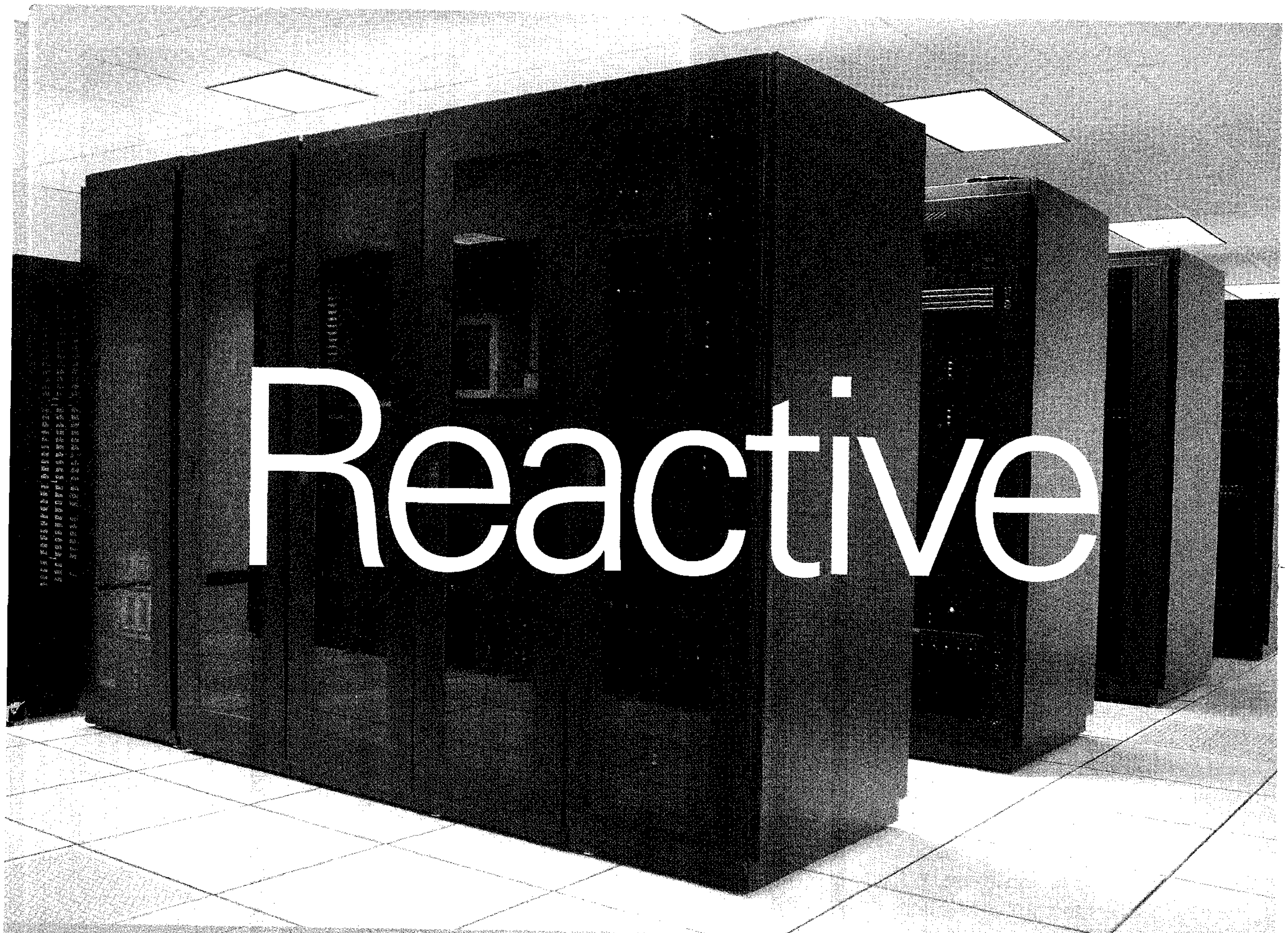
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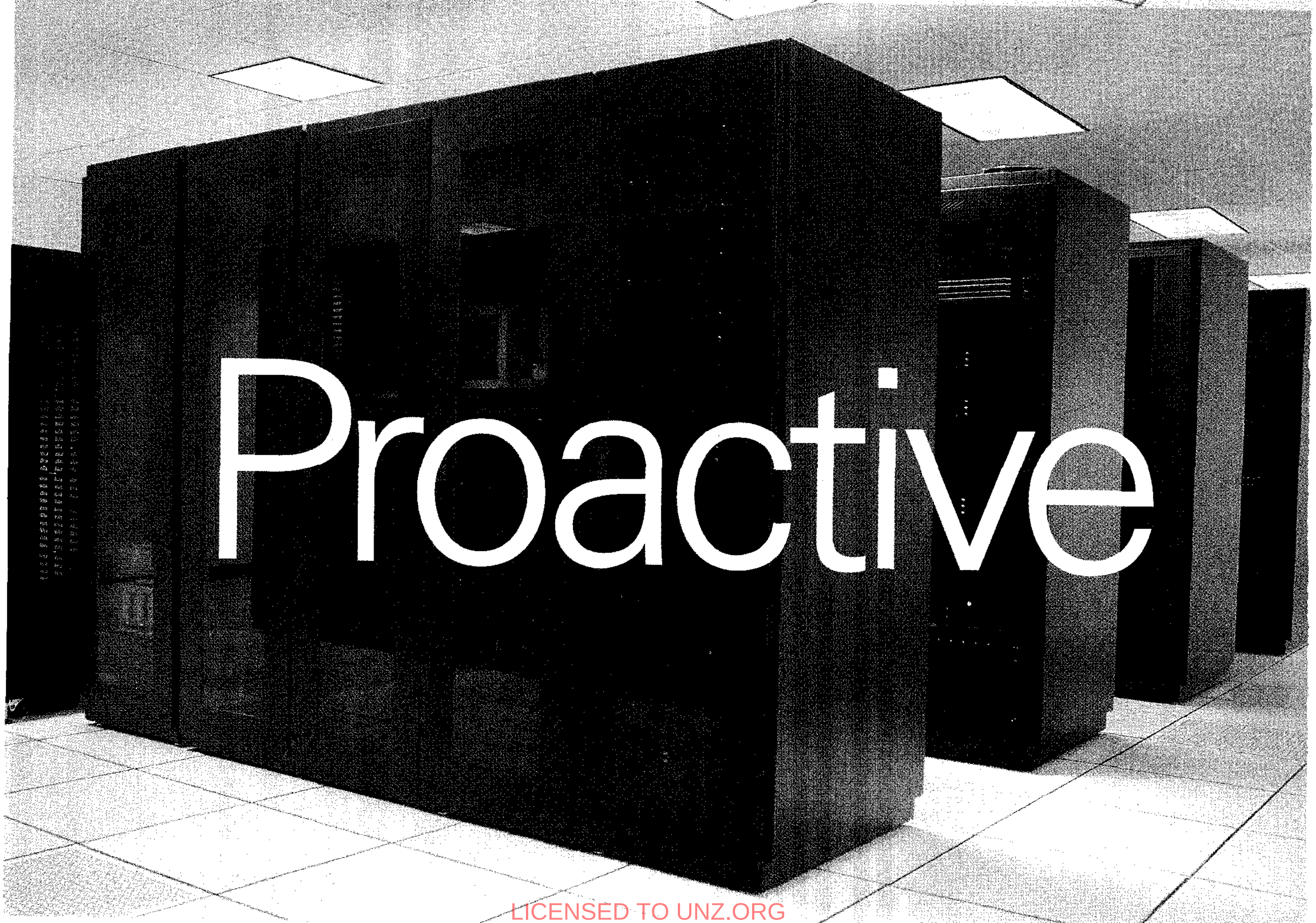
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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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BOLD GIRLS
The 29th Street Rep presents a play by Rona Munro about four women making the best of things in violence-ridden modern-day Belfast. Directed by Ludovica Villar-Hauser. In previews. (212 W. 29th St. 212-868-4444.)

THE BOY FROM OZ
The cinematic leading man Hugh Jackman stars in a new musical about the life and times of the Australian pop star Peter Allen, in which Stephanie Block plays Liza Minnelli and Beth Fowler plays his mother. Directed by Philip Wm. McKinley and choreographed by Joey McKneely, with a book by Martin Sherman ("Bent") and music and lyrics by Allen and others. Previews begin Sept. 16. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT
The annual series of lunchtime play readings at the National Arts Club begins this week with the original one-act version of Tennessee Williams' play "The Night of the Iguana," performed by Kathleen Turner and Lynn Redgrave and directed by Frank Corsaro, who directed the 1961 production on Broadway. A buffet precedes each show. Opens Sept. 15 at 1. (15 Gramercy Park S. 212-362-2560.)

THE HARLEQUIN STUDIES
The Signature Theatre Company kicks off its year-long Bill Irwin festival with a play that uses acrobatics and live music to explore the many sides of the commedia-dell'arte character. The playwright leads the cast and also directs. With original music by Doug Skinner, sets by Doug Stein, costumes by Catherine Zuber, and lights by James Vermeulen. In previews. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

A LIE OF THE MIND
White Horse Theatre Company revives Sam Shepherd's 1985 play about two families linked by domestic abuse. Directed by Cyndy Marion. Opens Sept. 12 at 7. Through Sept. 28. (Sargent, 314 W. 54th St. 212-868-4444.)

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS
The musical about a bloodthirsty extraterrestrial plant and the wimpy florist who becomes its slave gets a Broadway revival. Directed by Jerry Zaks. In previews. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200.)

LIVING OUT
Second Stage begins its twenty-fifth season with the New York première of a play by Lisa Loomer about a Los Angeles couple who get embroiled in nanny troubles, starring Kathryn Meisle as the Anglo mother and Zilah Mendoza as the El Salvadoran nanny. Directed by Jo Bonney. In previews. (307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

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THE NUCLEAR FAMILY
The popular downtown musical, in which the score and the cast are rejiggered during every performance, moves to the Zipper's Belt Theatre. Jimmy Bennett, John Gregorio, and Stephan Guarino star; Matt Cohen is in charge of the music. Opens Sept. 10 at 7. (336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200.)

OMNIUM GATHERUM
Theresa Rebeck and Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros bring their critically acclaimed dinner-party-à-clef play to New York from Louisville, where it had its première last spring. Kristine Nielsen leads a cast of "celebrity" guests, playing their hostess—a woman who has a famous cooking show and heads a commercial home-design empire. Directed by Will Frears. In previews. (Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave. 212-239-6200.)

RECENT TRAGIC EVENTS
Playwrights Horizons begins its season with a new play by Craig Wright that stars Heather Graham, in her New York stage début, as a Midwestern ad exec who goes through with a blind date the day after 9/11. With Kalimi A. Baxter, Hamish Linklater, Jesse J. Perez, and Colleen Werthmann. Directed by Michael John Garcés. In previews. (416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

ROUNDING THIRD
John Rando directs a new comedy by Richard Dresser about two warring Little League coaches with drastically different ideas about winning, losing, and how to play the game. Previews begin Sept. 16. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.

OPENED RECENTLY

AVENUE Q
This musical puppet-and-people show has much to recommend it: an exceptionally gifted cast, a strong book by Jeff Whitty, equally strong music and lyrics by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx, and the splendid direction of Jason Moore. The remarkable Ann Harada stands out—a funny girl who can sing, act, and let the audience in on the joke all at the same time. Harada's character, Christmas Eve, a Japanese-born therapist who can't seem to book a client, lives on Avenue Q, in an unspecified New York City borough, with her fiancé, Brian (Jordan Gelber), an unemployed caterer who once harbored dreams of becoming a comedian on late-night TV. "But I'm thirty-two and as you can see / I'm not. Oh well. / It sucks to be me," he sings, in the show's opening number. Humans act alongside cloth co-stars—such as Princeton, a bright-eyed college grad, and two girls who want to date him, a kindergarten teacher's aide named Kate Monster and a lounge singer called Lucy T. Slut (both performed by the great Stephanie D'Abruzzo). Is it possible to be attracted to a puppet? D'Abruzzo gives Lucy so much verve that when she saunters offstage in D'Abruzzo's hand—all the puppets are handheld—you want to follow her with wolf whistles. (Reviewed in our issue of 8/11/03.) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

BERKSHIRE VILLAGE IDIOT
Michael Isaac Connor is a one-man cast of thirty-three, in a new comedy about his small-town childhood directed by Barry Edelstein. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200.)

BIG RIVER
In this lively, ingeniously staged production, which features deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing actors, the American Sign Language adaptation of the classic musical gets its New York début. The play, based on Mark Twain's "Huckleberry Finn," has a witty book by William Hauptman and a rousing score and lyrics by Roger Miller, and the big musical numbers don't detract from the subtlety of Twain's exposition; instead, the songs and performances boost Twain's vibrant language and wild leaps of humor. A co-production of the Deaf West and Roundabout theatre companies. Directed by Jeff Calhoun. (American Airlines, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. Closes Sept. 21.)

BOOBS! THE MUSICAL
Ruth Wallis's cabaret songs may have been considered too raunchy for radio in the Eisenhower era, but today her goofily louche double entendres seem practically wholesome despite their naughty intent. (The idea that the yo-yo in the song "Johnny's Got a Yo Yo" might refer to something else of Johnny's, for example, no longer alarms the censors.) In a theatrical performance of twenty-one of Wallis's hits, produced by Michael Whaley, who co-wrote the show with Steve Mackes, the humor and observational powers of Wallis's lyrics can now be fully savored. Six talented actors sing the songs in a high-spirited revue, fleshing out their story lines. Particularly memorable is Rebecca Young, who, in one skit, licks a huge lollipop, dresses in a hyper-ruffled Little Bo Peep costume, and sings a sugar-crazed rendition of a song about a sailor, Davey, and his superlative dinghy. Directed by Donna Drake. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 212-239-6200.)

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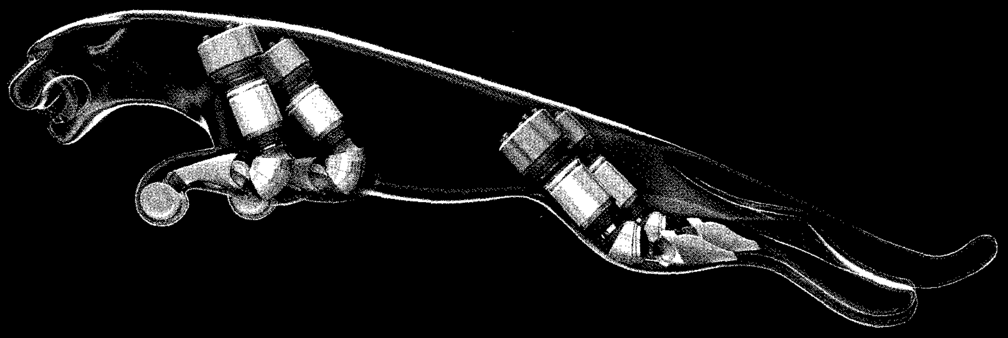

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CARNIVAL KNOWLEDGE
Todd Robbins, a light-bulb-eating carnival impresario and the dean of Brooklyn's Coney Island Sideshow School, is one of the last purveyors of the tradition of the American freak show. Here, he teams up with a hirsute dancing dwarf named Little Jimmy, Twistina the Rubber Lady, the Flying Ebola Brothers, and a handful of other freaks and geeks to bring the magic of the midway to a wider audience and to open the curtain on its secrets. Robbins even draws spectators into the act, although he doesn't encourage them to follow his example and hammer nails into their nostrils. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 212-239-6200.)

CHOCOLATE IN HEAT
The young playwright Betty Shamieh stars in a Semitic Root production of her play about the complicated realities of growing up Arab-American. Directed by Sam Gold. (Tank, 432 W. 42nd St. 212-868-4444.)

EDGE
In Sylvia Plath's most famous poem, "Daddy," she memorialized her father, Otto, writing, "Every woman adores a Fascist, / The boot in the face, the brute / Brute heart of a brute like you." When she met and married the English poet Ted Hughes, she found Daddy all over again, the poem implies; and when she committed suicide, at the age of thirty, the two men were left notionally guilty by association. This is the emotional trajectory Plath's fans trace when they think of her, and Paul Alexander, the author of two books about Plath, is no exception. In the one-woman monologue "Edge," which he directs and which he derived from his biography "Rough Magic," he has an agenda: he uses the facts of Plath's life to prove that Otto and Ted made her do it. Still, in a troubling and powerful performance, Angelica Torn makes us see what the script does not—the extent to which Plath, who believed that she didn't exist unless she was being subjugated by a man, manufactured her own downfall. (8/11/03) (DR2 Theatre, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. Closes Sept. 20.)

FLOW
Will Power meshes the concrete poetics of the old school with the freestyle charge of the new in his solo portrayal of an urban neighborhood where storytelling, in the griot tradition, is the only thing that can't be killed off. Moving like a balletic yoga instructor and accompanying himself with human beat-boxing, Power tackles each of his characters with verve. He is as energizing as Jacoba, a loose-lipped female schoolteacher, as he is as Ole Cheesy, a pimped-out street prophet. Power's entirely rapped delivery brings out a chord of soulful inner-city wit, and DJ Reborn's live mix provides umbilical backbeats and bass. Directed by Danny Hoch. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE LOVE-HUNGRY FARMER
Des Keogh stars in a poignant quasi-comedy about a bachelor farmer's efforts to find himself a wife, which he adapted from the stories of the Irish writer John B. Keane. Directed by Charlotte Moore. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. Closes Sept. 24.)

LYPSINKA: AS I LAY LIP-SYNCHING
John Epperson's glamorous, imperious camp diva gets a new outing in a Tweed Theatreworks production. Directed by Kevin Malony, with set and lighting by Mark T. Simpson and costumes by Bryant Hoven. (Show, 135 W. 41st St. 212-868-4444. Closes Sept. 14.)

MATT & BEN
This is one not to miss. In addition to being short—just over an hour—it's goofy, funny, and improbably believable. In captivating performances, Mindy Kaling (a compact, Indian-American woman in a tracksuit) and Brenda Withers (a lanky Wasp in khakis and a rumpled button-down) play Ben (Affleck) and Matt (Damon), best friends from the Cambridge Rindge & Latin School, who are holed up in 1997 in a filthy apartment, squabbling as they try to write a script. When the complete screenplay to "Good Will Hunting" literally drops from the ceiling, they are both floored and their friendship is tested. Kaling and Withers have created one of the most appealing male-bonding stories since Damon and Pythias, or Oscar and Felix. And within minutes you don't even notice that they're not male. Directed by David Warren. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288.)

NAMEDROPPING
David Rothenberg's fifty years in the theatre have allowed him to brush up against the stoles (or ascots) of Elizabeth Taylor, Bette Davis, Richard Burton, John Gielgud, and other icons of stage and screen. In a one-man show, he brings five decades of backstage drama and dish to center stage. Directed by Marcia Jean Kurtz. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

"The Thing About Men," at the Promenade.

NINE
In this elegant revival of Arthur Kopit and Maury Yeston's 1982 musical—an adaptation of Fellini's "8½"—Antonio Banderas plays Guido Contini, a film director whose genius is inextricable from his childlike narcissism. Good-looking, confident, and amusing, Banderas has a European restraint that only magnifies his passionate nature. He also has a fine voice. The other characters are satellites around Planet Guido: his put-upon wife (Mary Stuart Masterson), his battle-axe producer (Chita Rivera), and his tenacious and lubricious mistress, Carla (Jane Krakowski), who descends semi-nude from the rafters. Directed by David Leveaux. (4/21 & 28/03) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

PLAYING BURTON
The Irish Repertory Theatre presents a one-man show about the Welsh actor Richard Burton, written and directed by one of his countrymen, Mark Jenkins, and performed by the Burton look-alike Brian Mallon. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. Closes Sept. 14.)

THE THING ABOUT MEN
Doris Dörrie's ruefully resigned comedy of modern immorality, "Men," has become an uproarious musical—with exuberant songs about workaholism, betrayal, and compromise, performed by a cast with nimble comic timing. When the cheating ad man Tom (Marc Kudisch, who nails the "lovable jerk" character and also has a great baritone) finds out that his wife (Leah Hocking) is having an affair, he hunts down her lover, Sebastian (the dreamy tenor Ron Bohmer), and moves in with him (incognito). Jimmy Roberts' music buoyantly carries Joe DiPietro's excellent book and lyrics, and some of the best tunes ("Highway of Your Heart," "Me, Too") go to the mischievous Daniel Reichard and Jennifer Simard, who perform multiple caricature roles. The back wall of Richard Hoover's set is inlaid with concealed windows that slide open to reveal scene-setting video images. As the projections change, the stage morphs into a suburban living room, a scuzzy artist's loft, a dive bar, or an office. Like the set, the show flashes enough reality at the audience to keep things plausible, enough fantasy to keep things frisky. Directed by Mark Clements, with musical staging by Rob Ashford. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE THREEPENNY OPERA
Jean Cocteau Repertory begins its thirty-third season with Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's menacing Victorian musical, in the Marc Blitzstein translation. Directed by David Fuller. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 212-677-0060.)

TRUMBO
Nathan Lane stars in a remounted production of Christopher Trumbo's play about his courageous father, Dalton Trumbo, a blacklisted Hollywood screenwriter who refused to bend to the demands of the House Un-American Activities Committee. Directed by Peter Askin. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.)

URBAN STAGES
The theatre company begins its twentieth-anniversary season with two comic, bittersweet solo works about the American immigrant experience, which run in repertory: "In Spite of Myself," Antoinette LaVecchia's evocation of her relationship with her Italian-born mother, and "Origins of Happiness," Felix Pire's collection of stories about Cuban-Americans. (259 W. 30th St. 212-868-4444.)

WHAT EVER: AN AMERICAN ODYSSEY IN EIGHT ACTS
The California actress and performance artist Heather Woodbury brings her spoken-word journey through the American Zeitgeist to the East Village. In her sui-generis one-woman show—which Farrar, Straus & Giroux has just published as a work of fiction—Woodbury brings a sprawling cast of characters to life. The show is performed sequentially in eight performances divided among four consecutive evenings. Audiences are encouraged to see one, some, or all segments. Through Sept. 21. (Directed by Dudley Saunders. (P.S. 122, at 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288.)

WHAT'S YOUR KARMA?
For people who go in for this sort of thing, Lilith Dove's spooky, sandalwood-scented evening of past-lives performance art will amaze and entertain. Onstage, eyes shut, the English clairvoyant takes the measure of the psychic auras of assorted audience participants, delivers a rapid torrent of preternaturally specific details on the ground their souls covered in preceding centuries, then advises them how to conduct their present lives to pick up the thread of the past. At one recent performance, audience members were said to include two prior residents of the lost continent of Atlantis, a courtesan from fifteenth-century France, a witness to a crucifixion in the time of Christ, and a plantation slave. (Producers Club, 358 W. 44th St. 212-352-3101.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4747.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 212-254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200.

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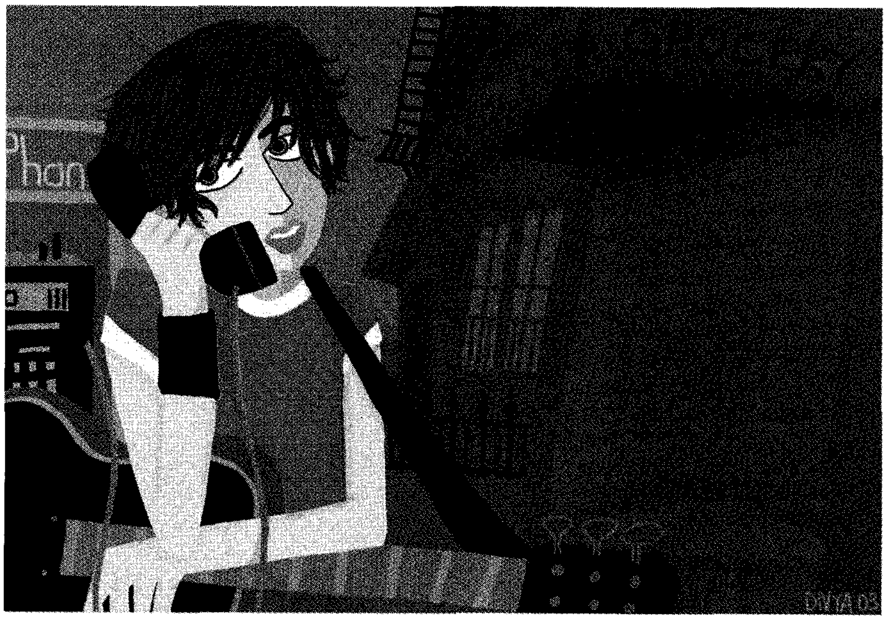
DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St.
212-239-6200.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St.
212-239-6200.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

GYPSY
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.



The singer-songwriter Adam Green, at the Knitting Factory.

DIVYA SRINIVASAN

KIKI AND HERB: COUP DE THÉÂTRE
Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St., between Bedford and Hudson Sts. 212-239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St.
212-307-4100.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St.
212-563-5544.

MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St.
212-307-4100.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-921-8000.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St.
212-477-2477.

TAKE ME OUT
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.

URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.

DANCE

"THE PHANTOM PROJECT—TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY SEASON"
Before there was the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, there were simply Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane, two promising young dancers who were also life partners. Now celebrating its twentieth season, the company revisits its roots by presenting many of Jones and Zane's signature works with new dancers working in new combinations. "Continuous Replay" (1977), a game with forty-five hand and arm gestures that began as a solo for Zane, is performed by an ensemble; rotating soloists re-create "Floating the Tongue," the 1983 piece in which Jones described his own movements as he made them; and alternating casts (one of them all women) render the evocative duet "Blauvelt Mountain (A Fiction)" (1980). Rigorously avant-garde in its pedestrian movement and eccentric partnering, the dance uses whispered conversation to paint a portrait of a relationship; in revival, the balance between austerity and poignance is intensified by the memory of Zane, who died in 1988. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11. Sept. 10-13 at 8. Through Sept. 20.)

2003 DANCENOW/NYC FALL FESTIVAL
Highlights of the second and final week of the ninth annual Dancenow festival include rafts of performances by local choreographers at the Joyce SoHo's "base camp," featuring Pat Catterson, Johannes Wieland, Wil Swanson/Danceworks, Battleworks, and others and one night of dance (by ZviDance, Kara Tatelbaum, Guta Hedewig, et al.) at the O.K. Harris art gallery at 383 West Broadway. The program concludes on the 13th with "The Final Splash," an eclectic collection of entertainments in the drained Carmine Street swimming pool, on the corner of Seventh Avenue and Leroy Street. Among the attractions: Vicky Virgin directs a marching band of artists across the pool, the Magbana Drum and Dance group beat out resounding African rhythms, and, at twilight, Laurie Mcleod/Victory Girl Productions projects a watery video dance on the pool floor, its digital dancers partnered by flesh ones. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. For complete festival schedule, call 718-850-2488 or see www.dancenownyc.org. Sept. 9-13.)

"DANCER'S NIGHT OUT"
Now in its second year, this Dance Theatre Workshop program gives respected modern dancers the chance to air their own ideas about choreography. In "Nudging Toward Normal," the dancer Renée Redding Jones uses expressive, gestural movement to show the individual's struggle against conformity; in "Opening Movement in a Still Life," Karen Graham illustrates the dramatic tension a silent scene can suggest; and in "Self-Obliteration Companion," Heather Kravas enacts the agon between ego and id. (Bessie Schönberg Theatre, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Sept. 11-13 at 7.)

"EXPLODING PLASTIC ACORNS!"
A nonsensical evening of dance theatre, double entendre, and physical comedy, conceived and choreographed by Carrie Ahern and Jennifer Cooper, includes "Boxing the Flea," a riff on dating rituals and exclusive social clubs; "Postcard from the City," a sultry reverie on hot city nights, set to the music of Charles Mingus; and "Perpetual Gertrude," a dotty homage to the Dickens jiltee Miss Havisham. The local dancers Donna Bouthillier, Carolyn Hall, and Debra Rodman join in the antics. (Williamsburg Arts Nexus, 205 N. 7th St., between Driggs Ave. and Roebling St. 718-599-7997. Sept. 12-13 at 8 and Sept. 14 at 6.)

"SEPTEMBER 11TH: AN EVENING OF MEMORIAL AND RENEWAL"
In an interdisciplinary, commemorative evening, Dwana Adiaha Smallwood of Alvin Ailey American Dance performs the solo "Cry"; the Chiara String Quartet plays Messiaen's "Quartet for the End of Time" and Mozart's "Clarinet Quintet in A Major," with the soloist Alexander Fiterstein; and the authors Susan Cheever and Frank McCourt read texts of their own choosing. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. For reservations, which are required, call 212-415-5500. Sept. 11 at 7:30.)

"A TRIBUTE TO KATHERINE DUNHAM"
Pangea Theatre Company presents a benefit evening of performance and dance honoring the life and work of the nonagenarian choreographer Katherine Dunham, who introduced North American audiences to many Caribbean dances over the course of her long career. Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee host the event, which features dances by Paulette Saint-Lot and the Ibo dancers of Haiti and by the Marie Brooks Pan Caribbean Dance Company. The evening also includes a presentation of rarely performed Dunham dances, curated by Glory Van Scott, and a première performance of original music by Wynton Marsalis. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Sept. 12 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

BILLY IDOL
Despite counting himself as an alumnus of the first wave of British punk rock, Idol has always come across as more silly than surly—a sneering, cartoonish pinup that declawed the real menace of seventies punk for the pop-loving eighties audience. The ensuing years may have thinned his blond spikes, but Idol remains as endearingly ridiculous as ever. With his original guitarist and collaborator, Steve Stevens, back at his side, expect him to pump his first and rebel-yell like the nineties never happened. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 212-307-7171. Sept. 10 at 8.)

ZANKEL HALL
The intimate new underground venue (see also Classical Music) finds room for jazz, first with the Cuban pianist **Omar Sosa**, who brings in his octet on Sept. 12, and then with **Kenny Barron**, as seasoned and trusted a mainstream pianist as can be found, the following night. His quintet includes the young vibraphone wizard **Stefon Harris**, who shares a special rapport with the bandleader. (881 Seventh Ave., at 57th St. 212-247-7800. Both shows are at 10.)

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS
One of the unlikeliest acts to have survived from the eighties college-rock boom, the Red Hot Chili Peppers came out of Los Angeles two decades ago as a gaggle of funk-obsessed punks with an unfailing appreciation for nudity. After eight albums, countless changes in their ranks, and some sobering brushes with drug abuse and death, the Peppers have become elder statesmen, more prone to introspection than libidinous high jinks. (Jones Beach Theatre. 212-307-7171. Sept. 13 at 7.)

DAVID LEE ROTH
Roth reigned supreme over the realms of hard rock and heavy metal as the front man for Van Halen—until personal differences led to a split from the band and consigned him to a dead-end solo career. While hard-core Van Halen fans pine for a reunion, Roth spends his time with such puzzling projects as his latest album, "Diamond Dave," which finds the hyperactive singer ill-advisedly covering classics by Hendrix, the Doors,

POP NOTES

SIMPLER PLEASURES

Last year, the power-pop luminary Matthew Sweet joined forces with Shawn Mullins and Pete Droge to form the Thorns, a soft-headed soft-rock band that received plenty of attention but left no lasting impression at all. Sweet's most recent solo album, however, finds him writing more of the indelibly gorgeous, lovelorn songs that sent his star into ascendance a dozen years ago with his album "Girlfriend." So why isn't the solo record getting more publicity? Because it was released only in Japan. "**Kimi Ga Suki * Raifu**" (Cutting Edge) was written in a week and intended as a gift for Sweet's Japanese fans. The opener, "Dead Smile," gives the record a running start, with plaintive vocals and Ric Menck's propulsive drumming. Songs like "Morning Song" and "Wait" find Sweet revisiting the rootsier side of "Girlfriend," particularly in the generous use of slide guitar, and "Love Is Gone" distills his best instincts with a lovely melody and aching harmonies. On the hidden bonus track, "Sayonara," Sweet promises his Japanese fans that he'll "see [them] sometime soon"; his American fans deserve the same treatment.

The last album by the Alabama rock band Drive-By Truckers, "Southern Rock Opera," was about as ambitious as rock music gets these days: a two-CD concept piece about the rise and fall of a Lynyrd Skynyrd-like band, filled with meaty riffs and passionate vocals. "**Decoration Day**" (New West), the group's follow-up, wisely abandons the cinematic scope of its predecessor for a more intimate scale. From defiant jeremiads like "Hell No, I Ain't Happy" to textured character sketches like "Outfit" (a collection of father-to-son counsel that includes the hilarious advice "Don't call what you're wearing an outfit" before veering into more poignant territory), the songs here paint a picture of a South that's at once mythic and gritty.

—*Ben Greenman*

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and, somewhat unthinkably, the Beatles. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 212-307-7171. Sept. 13 at 8.)

ANDRE THIERRY AND ZYDECO MAGIC

A night of hot washboards and accordions. Chank-a-chank, as they say. (Hungarian House, 213 E. 82nd St. For more information, call 212-685-7597. Sept. 14 at 7:30.)

PSYCHEDELIC FURS

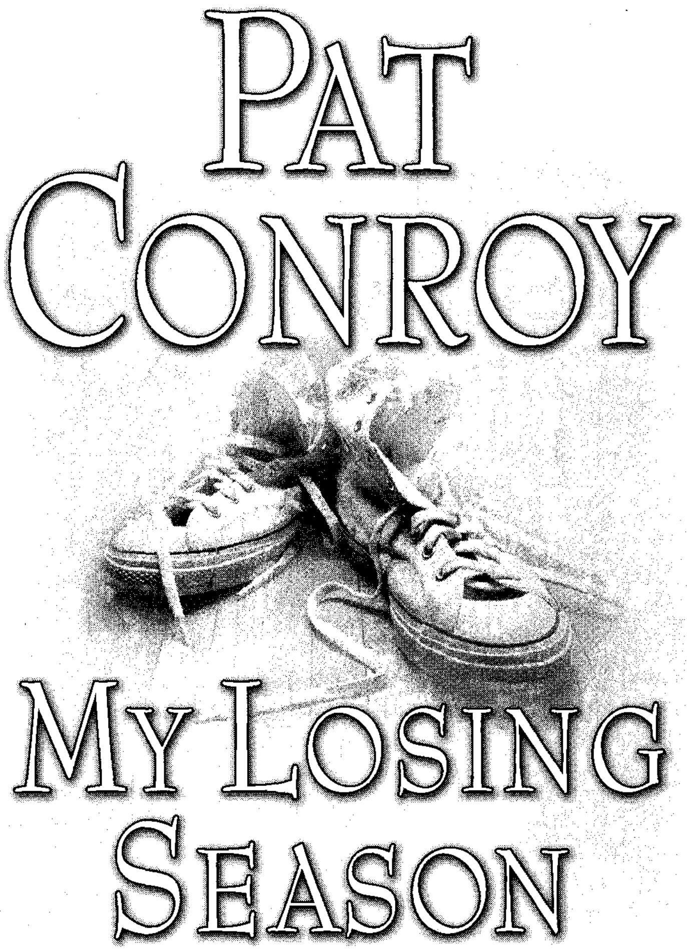
By uniting the brashness of the Sex Pistols with the icy veneer of the Velvet Underground, the Psychedelic Furs became one of the most beloved outfits of the eighties. They delivered a clutch of memorable pop singles, including "Love My Way" and "Pretty in Pink"; the latter made them a household name when it was selected as the theme song for a John Hughes film. But the film also cost them some of their cool and cachet, and by the end of the decade the band had floundered. Following numerous attempts at reinvention, the Furs return for a spin on the nostalgia circuit. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-840-2824. Sept. 16 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Sept. 10: Feverishly touted as the South's answer to the Strokes, Nashville's **Kings of Leon** may share the same aesthetic (unkempt locks, thrift-store chic, an unhealthy



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diet) as their Northern peers, but the similarities largely end there. Their début album, "Youth & Young Manhood," owes more to Southern rock and alternative country than to the seventies punk of N.Y.C. Sept. 14-15: Prone to self-satisfied smirking and bouts of hedonism, Oregon's **Dandy Warhols** never seemed to quite live up to their oh-so-cool image, morphing from a droning dream-pop band into novelty songsmiths thanks to "Not If You Were the Last Junkie on Earth" and "Bohemian Like You." Roping in the foppish Duran Duran keyboardist, Nick Rhodes, to produce their latest album, "Welcome to the Monkey House," they try their hand at neo-New Wave.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Sept. 10: **Stew,** a raconteur and singer on leave from his Los Angeles power-pop outfit the Negro Problem, writes sophisticated songs that are not likely to be heard on the radio. Echoes of Cole Porter, Burt Bacharach, and Randy Newman can be heard in his work, which balances easy drug references and jokes about Che Guevara with stories of naked Dutch painters and girls who have "switchblade minds." He delivers his carefully detailed narratives in a hushed tone that quickly makes you feel like an insider in his "AfroBaroque" world.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—Constantly touring, the North Jersey guitar rocker **Ted Leo** is known for his impassioned and energetic live shows. He'll bring the passion, but not his backing band the Pharmacists, when he stops by on Sept. 11 for a solo acoustic set in remembrance of the 2001 terrorist attacks. Leo has always mixed pop with politics, and the lyrics of his latest, "Hearts of Oak," are thoughtful, sometimes angry meditations on post-9/11 life. Sept. 12: **Kelly Joe Phelps,** a lapsed jazz guitarist who now plays acoustic country blues. Sept. 16: **Adam Green,** late of the potty-mouthed anti-folk duo the Moldy Peaches, whose solo work is like a cross between Jonathan Richman and Tenacious D. Wednesdays this month: The guitarist **Jim Campilongo** swims moodily through jazz, country, and blues like a back-room Bill Frisell. His Electric Trio plays calm but charged sets.

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—Sept. 11: **Antibalas,** a fourteen-piece multiracial ensemble from Williamsburg, Brooklyn, takes its musical and political inspiration from the Afro-beat innovator Fela Kuti. Its shows are a thunderous mass of rhythms, horns, and bass. Dining.

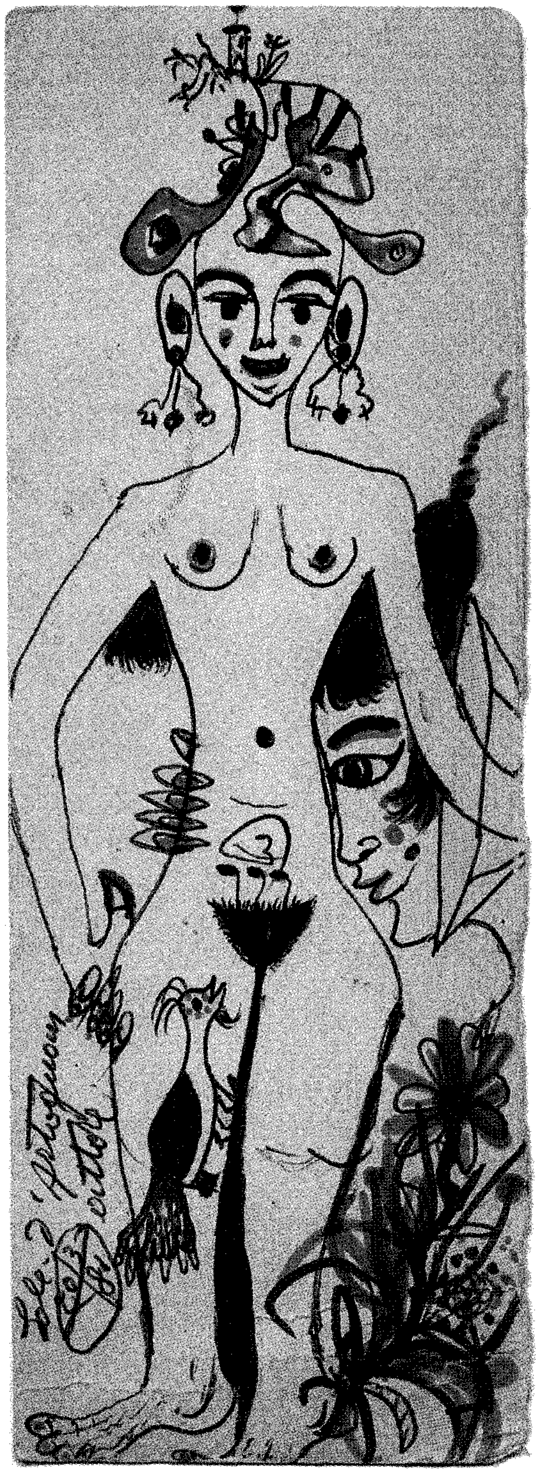
SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—Sept. 15: Fronted by the hard-edged Afro-topped vocalist Lisa Kekaula, Los Angeles's **Bellrays** bring soul to the garage-rock revival. If it seems as if they've mastered all the tricks of their forebears (that'd be everyone from the MC5 to James Brown), chalk it up to their experience—they've been at it for nearly a decade now. With **Nebula.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through Sept. 14: A double bill of saxophonists divided by a generation or two. The tenor saxophonist **Pharoah Sanders** may have first come to attention in the sixties when his howling free jazz scared the pants off listeners, but he has since evolved into a more settled, pan-stylistic improviser, albeit one with a decidedly passionate streak. **Kenny Garrett** is a technically gifted alto player who made his name with Miles Davis in the eighties.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through Sept. 14: **Freddie Hubbard & the Jazz Composers Octet.** Lip problems are the bane of trumpet players' lives, and the once indestructible Freddie Hubbard isn't immune to them. The spirit is still willing, though, and, with the support of the ambitious young acolytes that make up the Jazz Composers Octet, "the Hub" will give it his best shot. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Through Sept. 14: The **Cedar Walton All-Star Quintet.** A quiet giant, the pianist Walton isn't afraid of sharing the spotlight, even at his own gig. His All-Star quintet lives up to its name with the saxophonist **Gary Bartz,** the trombonist **Curtis Fuller,** the bassist **Buster Williams,** and the drummer **Jimmy Cobb.** Superior old-school hard bop is a given. Dining.



"Tentazione dell'Uccello," a drawing by Ele D'Artagnan, at KS Art.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Sept. 12: The **Luciana Souza** quartet. On her latest album, "North and South," the singer elegantly takes on Brazilian favorites and durable American standards, flaunting her high style on both. Sept. 14: **Willem Breuker Kollektief.** Trafficking in disciplined anarchy, these spectacularly skilled Dutchmen mate classical precision with free-jazz ideas and spice it all with Marx Brothers antics. They're irreverent, virtuosic, and downright funny.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—Sept. 12-13: The recent interest in Latin jazz must come as old news to **Michele Rosewoman,** a resourceful pianist and composer who's been mating tropical rhythms and new-jazz improvisation in her Quintessence bands since the late eighties. As a leader she has sharp ears; the saxophonists Steve Coleman and Greg Osby were earlier Quintessence members; today's edition includes the saxophonists **Miguel Zenon** and **Mark Shim.**

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—Turning fifty in style, **John Zorn** continues his month-long birthday celebration with a survey of some of his more celebrated associations, including the Jewish music ensemble Bar Kokhba (Sept. 12-13) and a duet with the daring guitarist **Fred Frith** (Sept. 15).

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Sept. 14: Another milestone is reached as this venerable club welcomes the quintet of **Harry Allen** and **Scott Hamilton,** two tenor saxophonists whose traditionally minded styles harken back to the swing mainstream of the forties and fifties. Both men have the idiom at their fingertips—Hamilton predated Wynton Marsalis's neo-trad ethic by at least a decade, and the younger Allen can bring the poetic spirit of Stan Getz into a room. With musical pluralism now the jazz norm, these two will do just fine here, even if this is hardly the usual Vanguard fare. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—On May 16, 1703, the six-foot-eight-inch tsar Peter the Great stood in a swamp beside the Neva River and proclaimed it the site for a new city that would take his name and earn the sobriquet "the Venice of the North." For **"Celebrating St. Petersburg,"** the Met raided its collection to mark the tricentennial of imperial Russia's capital city, and the small exhibition is a dazzler, stuffed with German silver, Sèvres porcelain, and snuffboxes encrusted with gold, enamel, ivory, and jewels from the reign of Catherine the Great (1762-96), an era aptly dubbed the "Age of Diamonds." Through Jan. 25. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—**"Ansel Adams at 100"** is a retrospective of the mountain man, whose exquisitely made, self-conscious photographs of spectacular Western scenery are a hard case in modern art. In form, Adams was impeccably modernist, and he had a command of photographic aesthetics as thoroughgoing, within its narrower range, as Edward Weston's. In feeling, Adams was a populist romantic, retreading sentimental conventions of God's country. To enjoy his imperious mastery and his swooning piety equally does not seem possible; they trip each other up. And the hanging of the smallish prints in the warehouse space of

ZANKEL HALL
AT CARNEGIE

"A New Underground at Carnegie, in More Ways Than One"
—The New York Times

TICKETS ON SALE NOW

John Adams

James Levine

Youssou N'Dour

Dianne Reeves

Yo-Yo Ma

Kenny Barron

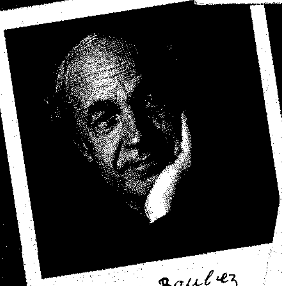
Anna Deavere Smith

Omar Sosa

Meredith Monk

Bill Frisell

The Orchestra of Fes


Pierre Boulez

Andreas Scholl

CONCERT: BROOKLYN
YOUTH CHORUS
The Brooklyn Youth Cho
Dianne Berkun, Artistic
and Conductor
$5

Saturday, Sept. 13 a
ANNA DEAVERE
$25

Saturday, Sept. 13 a
KENNY BARRON
QUINTET featuri
STEFON HARRIS
$25

Sunday, Sept. 14 a
THEATRE OF VO
Paul Hillier, Director a
$25

Sunday, Sept. 14 a
FREDERIC RZEWSKI, piano
$25

Sunday, Sept. 14 at
MEREDITH MONK
VOCAL ENSEMBLE
$25

Monday, Sept. 15 at
EMERSON STRI
QUARTET
EMANUEL AX
$38, $50

Tuesday, Sept. 1
at 7 PM & 10 PM
YOUSSOU N'DO
$50

ORCHE
$30, $42

CARN
FAMILY CONCERT
TAHUA
MUSIC OF THE
$5

Saturday, Sept.
THE ORCHESTRA OF
with FRANCO DE
$38, $50

Sunday, Sept.
THE MET CH
ENSEMBLE
JAMES LEVINE
Artistic Direct
Jennifer
Matthew
$48, $62

Sunday, Sept.
BRAD MEHLDAU
$35

Monday, Sept. 22 a
SACRED VOICES
David Robertson, Cond
Synergy Vocals
$30, $42

AND
$64

$45

Saturday, Sept.
BILL FRISELL
$35

Sunday, Sept. 28
RANDY NEW
$

ZANKEL HALL
AT CARNEGIE

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Photo credits: Smith courtesy of CBS; Barron by Cheung Ching Ming; Scholl by James McMillan/Decca, N'Dour by Galilea Nin; Ma by Chris Lee; Levine by Koichi Miura; Monk by Schafer; Frisell by Michael Wilson. Programs and artists subject to change. © 2003 CHC CODE: MNYR

MOMA QNS is a blunder—the show looks dwarfed and dismal. Through Nov. 3. ♦ This succinct retrospective tests Max Beckmann's long-pending claim to parity with the modern masters of Paris. The curator Robert Storr's trenchant selection and airy hanging make a winning case. How does one look at art that is laden with elusive, often quite lugubrious portent? The show's answer: as painting. Beckmann's manipulations of aggressive, theatrical space are dazzlingly supple. The trick, for the viewer, is to receive the pictures passively, letting their organization declare itself. Even, or especially, when its imagery is gnarled and bizarre, a great Beckmann attains startling unity, notably through making light-dark modelling inseparable from warm-cool color. Depth and surface become one. Beckmann does all the work: our role is to be bowled over. Through Sept. 29. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"From Picasso to Pollock"** revives a tried-and-true Guggenheim custom: installing highlights from the permanent collection. The result is a satisfying, albeit familiar parade of modernist styles and masterworks, from Miró and Brancusi down at ground level to de Kooning, Rothko, et al. up in the empyrean. Along the way, the show digresses, like a helplessly enthusiastic collector, to offer a mini-retrospective of watercolors by Wassily Kandinsky. The show ranges from his early scrambled seascapes to late biomorphic abstractions, neatly encapsulating a great, eccentric career. To visitors from Chelsea, Kandinsky's trippy, spin-cycle compositions may suggest links to contemporary talents like Julie Mehretu and Steve Di Benedetto. Through Sept. 28. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—We've seen a lot of him lately, but **"Ellsworth Kelly: Red Green Blue"** is the kind of spare, smart show that can perk up even satiated appetites. Organized by Toby Kamps at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, the exhibition focusses on a group of eight large paintings made between 1958 and 1965. The continuity of color choices (it's the same red, the same green, the same blue every time) puts the focus on simple changes in scale and shape, and offers a kind of Rothko Chapel-like immersion in Kelly's elemental hedonism. There are a few rooms of supplementary material—sketches, prints, and a new canvas in the same palette—but at its heart, the show really boils down to just two rooms, three colors, and one sleek vibe. Through Nov. 2. ♦ In **"The American Effect,"** forty-seven artists and filmmakers react to the myths and policies of the United States. Through Oct. 12. ♦ For sheer joy in materials, no one can compete with Sarah Sze. Binder clips, bright-blue Windex bottles, fake grass, PVC pipe, drinking straws, orange string—put it all together in the Whitney's moatlike sunken courtyard and you've got **"The Triple Point of Water."** This refers to the solid, liquid, and gaseous states of H_2O, and it's an ethereal title, but the elaborate installation is a marvel, a delicate, multilevel habitat, a miniature city or ecosystem animated by little fans and burbling aquariums. Through Oct. 9. ♦ Louise Bourgeois did most of the two hundred and twenty pen and pencil drawings in **"The Insomnia Drawings"** between November, 1994, and June, 1995, during a prolonged stretch of sleeplessness. The work, she says, is "a kind of rocking or stroking and an attempt to find a kind of peace. Like rocking a baby to sleep." Casting her own psyche as a fretful and voracious infant is vintage Bourgeois strategy, and the drawings—mostly in red ballpoint, with an emphasis on circles, spirals, looming buildings, and abstracted visages—are as twitchy and hallucinatory as you might fear. Through Sept. 21. (Open Wednesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT ALTRIA
120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (212-878-2550)—Corporate lobbies don't generally conjure hippie communes. Katy Grinnan has managed the trick with a freewheeling installation that sprouts corn, peppers, and tomatoes growing in plastic buckets of soil. The ambitious show suggests early Jason Rhoades or a 4-H version of Sarah Sze with its eclectic sprawl of everyday materials (aside from the vegetable elements, there are aluminum beams, grow lights, and a plastic bench). Some aspects make use of the building's existing greenery: a brightly patterned mobile dangling from the ceiling (Calder by way of Ken Kesey) seems to have shed layers into the treetops below. Through Jan. 4. (Open weekdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM
45 W. 53rd St. (212-265-1040)—Baseball produces relics as readily as statistics, and the refreshing art in the American Folk Art Museum's **"The Perfect Game: America Looks at Baseball"** includes penny-arcade sluggers, player portraits embroidered by a game-deprived convict from sock and shoelace threads, several balls decorated with India ink by a multitalented umpire, frieze work from the original Yankee Stadium, a mysterious Mets logo fashioned by a Cuna Indian seamstress in Panama, an enamel-on-tin image of Jackie Robinson stealing home, and photographs of the shin-

TABLES FOR TWO

RUG-B
1310 Cortelyou Rd., Brooklyn (718-284-0024)—There aren't many sit-down restaurants in and around Brooklyn's Ditmas Park, the big cluster of Victorian homes halfway out to Coney Island. There's no shortage of establishments that serve snacks of many nations, which tend to be messy, spicy, and eaten standing up. But this minimalist, cool Caribbean café wants to be something more: the kind of place you might take a date to.

The one-room storefront, named after nearby Rugby Road, has only two luxuries: broad-plank floors and a collection of scuffed antique lanterns. On cool summer nights, the clamor of the children playing at the little playground next door comes in through the French doors opened to the street. A guy in a uniform of white tank top and blue Adidas track pants—the owner, Phil Davis, a native of St. Vincent—greets everyone as if they were finally arriving at his house party. This laid-back vibe is Rug-B's strength and its weakness: it extends to the kitchen, whose rhythm can be erratic, as well as to the liquor policy, which is B.Y.O.B.—guests order pineapple juice served in Mason jars, then spike it with rum.

The food is island refined with an Asian spin, like the beer-battered shrimp in mango purée, pumpkin tempura with wasabi, or, for dessert, fried banana wontons with sorrel caramel. Some entrées are supposedly inspired by Flatbush's ethnic mix (like the mixed seafood "run down" with sweet potatoes, coconut milk, lemongrass, and Thai chiles), but the Q-train blend of East and West Indies is better represented by the curry chicken roti, a stew of curried chicken on the bone, loosely wrapped in a delicate Indian flat bread.

The place, which celebrated its first anniversary in July, has become a busy local clubhouse. Big families push tables together, community groups hold casual meetings, toddlers smuggle in dolls and toy racecars. You can see Davis smiling steadfastly through it, perhaps wondering what he's gotten himself into. On Sunday nights he hauls the tables out to the back yard, where he serves a robust b.b.q. version of the menu off open grills as a raucous jazz band plays under a string of Chinese lanterns. (Open for dinner, Tuesdays through Sundays, and for brunch on weekends. Entrées $7-$16.)

—*Owen Phillips*

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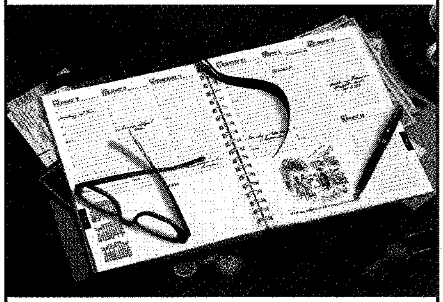

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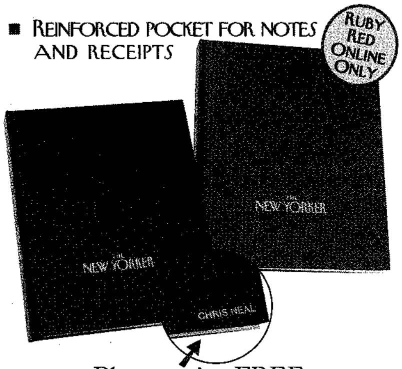

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BOOK CURRENTS

Smells Like Teen Spirit

Catherine Hardwicke's new film, "Thirteen," has once again raised the issue of adolescent girls' social rituals, especially the more brutal aspects. The same topic propels two recent books, Rachel Simmons's **ODD GIRL OUT** (Harcourt) and **QUEEN BEES AND WANNABES** (Three Rivers), by Rosalind Wiseman. According to Simmons, adolescent female culture is fraught with treachery and strained niceties ("alternative aggressions," she calls them) that are more reminiscent of a sixteenth-century court than a sweet-sixteen party. Wiseman, whose book has been released in paperback, includes a set of charts that plot "power plays" and track the ascendance of a socially dominant girl, a "Queen Bee" among the drones. But by collecting the byzantine stories of betrayal, both authors provide a tonic to social isolation: as Simmons puts it, "What crushed girls was being alone."

Linda Perlstein came to a similar conclusion in her interviews with Maryland middle-schoolers in **NOT MUCH JUST CHILLIN'** (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). For all their rebellion, experimentation, and body piercing, kids still want to be reached by their coaches, teachers, and even parents. "Wanting to be independent is not the same as wanting to be left alone," Perlstein writes. The sixth to eighth graders she interviews have complex opinions on justice, religion, and mortality—while adults fret over whether video games create irrational fears of violence, students formulate sophisticated responses to events such as the terrorist attacks of September 11th. And one seventh-grade girl is equally philosophical about love: "The one for you could be two years old right now, or ninety. My soulmate could've been Benjamin Franklin."

—*Lauren Porcaro*

ing but evanescent Bosox patterns mowed onto the Fenway Park outfield grass by groundskeeper David R. Mellor, a Cézanne of this new genre. Cooperstown, take note. Through Feb. 1. ♦ For the last ten years of the nineteenth century, Fritz Vogt, a German immigrant who died on New Year's Day in 1900, roamed New York's Mohawk Valley drawing architectural portraits on commission—houses, farms, a cheese factory. Vogt got off to a timid start doing straightforward early portraits of churches in graphite—there are a few included in the show's twenty-six selections—but soon began to hit his stride, incorporating colored pencil and an idiosyncratic flattened perspective that reveals three sides of a building at once. The artist reportedly shunned offers of lodging, preferring to bunk on bales of hay, and his tidy world of clapboard, shutter, and fence is eerily exterior. Through Sept. 21. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 7:30.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Entertaining America: Jews, Movies, and Broadcasting"** considers Hollywood's role as a Jewish empire. A section on "The Jazz Singer" sets clips of Danny Thomas, Jerry Lewis, Neil Diamond, and Krusty the Clown against a projection of Al Jolson's original performance from the first talkie (which includes Jewish ghetto scenes vetted by Benjamin Warner, father of the Warner Bros.), but the case for such influence gets weaker in recent years. Vitrines full of artifacts play the "Jews in the News" game, offering such items as Marilyn Monroe's musical menorah and the conversion certificate she signed after marrying Arthur Miller. The product here, as in Hollywood, is almost religiously indifferent to subject matter, with clips of Holocaust films showing alongside "Seinfeld" reruns. Through Sept. 14. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45; Thursdays, 11 to 8; and Fridays, 11 to 3.)

MUSEUM OF ARTS & DESIGN
40 W. 53rd St. (212-956-3535)—Just in case you thought the former American Craft Museum wasn't serious about its name change, the new MAD has hosted an ambitious survey that quietly snubs the one category—unique handmade objects—most nearly synonymous with its old craft mandate. Apart from that omission, **"USDesign 1975-2000,"** which originated at the Denver Art Museum, selects from everything under the sun: architecture, furniture, posters, Rollerblades, movie trailers, you name it. As a potted history of recent design trends, the show inevitably offers lots of familiar material, by the likes of Frank Gehry, Michael Graves, Karim Rashid, and Steven Holl. Jaded viewers may be tempted, perhaps unfairly, to begin thinking of MAD as Cooper-Hewitt Lite. Through Nov. 2. (Open Mondays, noon to 6; Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6; and Thursday evenings until 8.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-534-1672)—**"Roaring Into the Twenties: The *New* New York Woman"** looks at the emancipated woman of the Jazz Age. The show nods to political advances—particularly suffrage and employment outside the home—but spends more time with fashion, offering a dazzling array of the beaded sheaths, silk stockings, and gauzy underthings that announced the particular freedoms of the era. The real progress seems to have been in brassieres, and there are several on show. Through Sept. 14. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

MUSEUM OF TELEVISION AND RADIO
25 W. 52nd St. (212-621-6800)—What's black and Jewish and has great moves and a microphone? Those who answered Lenny Kravitz may want to watch **"Sammy in the Sixties,"** a ninety-minute medley of interviews and performances by the irrepressible Sammy Davis, Jr. The sampling begins with a remarkable 1964 interview, filmed during Davis's Broadway run in "Golden Boy." An audience of narrow-tied, bouffant-haired college kids watch in delight as Davis demonstrates his modesty and poise and then slowly sheds them. Wisecracks give way to bouts of head-wiggling hilarity. He slaps himself, sings, smokes, conducts, does impressions of Jerry Lewis and Bogie. By the end, you have a sense of a personality nearly unhinged by the multifariousness of his own talent. Through April 6. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
583 Broadway (212-219-1222)—The Venezuelan artist José Antonio Hernández-Diez makes sly social commentaries his stock in trade (in one photograph, the logos on a stack of pricey athletic shoes spell out M-A-R-X). His less than traditional sculptural materials include baseball bats and pork bellies transformed into skateboards with the addition of wheels. In one work, a dead dog, housed in a Plexiglas box, alludes to obscure religious reliquaries devoted to a martyred greyhound worshipped as a saint by medieval peasants (but never canonized by the Catholic Church). Hernández-Diez clearly intends to raise complex issues of class (he substitutes a rangy mutt for the sleek canine of legend, for instance), but in his quest for a punch line he risks trading eloquence for superficiality. Through Sept. 21. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

JOHN S. CONWAY
The longtime Milwaukee resident (1852-1925) was an academic's academic—someone who seems not to have even considered the desirability of having a distinctive style. When he wasn't working on portraits or historical tableaux, Conway painted sketches of Wisconsin woods, French villages, and the countryside around Rome, where he spent a good portion of his professional career. These bright, lively specimens of Conway's unflamboyant realism will impress fans of the plein-air tradition—maybe enough to send them west to take a fresh look at his chef d'oeuvre, "Agriculture and the Industries Bringing Their Tribute to Milwaukee." Through Sept. 12. (Kennedy, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-541-9600.)

JOHN FUNT
Landscape paintings in a limited palette of rural Connecticut. Through Oct. 4. (James Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-535-5767.)

BEVERLY MAYERI
The onetime student of Robert Arneson makes handsome and utterly un-Arnesonian clay sculptures of introverts. Young men and women are portrayed in the midst of grooming activities so low key (buttoning a shirt, wringing out a washcloth) that they might as well have their hands folded quietly in their laps. Mayeri evidently intends to hit some kind of ritualistic, calming note, but she overshoots the mark—her figures could be comically placid ornaments for a headache clinic. Through Sept. 12. (Parrasch, 20 W. 57th St. 212-246-5360.)

JENNIFER REEVES
The uptown portion of a two-part exhibition (the other section is being shown at the gallery's new space in Chelsea, at 532 W. 24th St.) includes paintings, works on paper, and assemblages, which contain phrases from devotional texts, pop songs, or art criticism. Through Oct. 11. (Galeria Ramis Barquet, 41 W. 57th St. 212-675-3421.)

RICHARD STANKIEWICZ
The father of junk art gets an abbreviated, overdue retrospective. After a stint in the Navy and study in Europe, Stankiewicz (1922-83) began welding rusty steel detritus—boiler tanks, manifolds, propellers, nails, you name it—into the intricate, wry configurations that made him one of the famous names of the fifties and sixties. Like David Smith and Mark di Suvero, Stankiewicz was a flamboyantly gifted sculptor; unlike them, he welcomed anthropomorphism, highlighting it with interpretive titles like "Urchin," "Family Portrait," and "Middle-Aged Couple." The results make for mixed pleasures: an amalgam of beauty and

RICHARD McGUIRE

whimsy, Rust Belt solemnity and folk-art cutesiness. It's a pity that the show couldn't accommodate the large-scale works of the seventies and eighties, which might have given a fuller sense of his legacy. Through Sept. 25. (AXA, 787 Seventh Ave., at 51st St. 212-554-4818.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ELLEN BERKENBLIT
Drawings and paintings on metal of animals and figures in a dreamlike private world. Through Oct. 4. (Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663.)

LEO DE GOEDE
Whorling large-scale abstractions that turn out to be magnified versions of paper that the artist has marbled. Through Oct. 4. (Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave., at 27th St. 212-563-4474.)

RITA MC BRIDE
Three machinelike titanium sculptures and a series of awnings continue the artist's exploration of everyday objects and neglected aspects of architecture. Through Oct. 11. (Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-367-7474.)

JILL WEINSTOCK
Cast-rubber sculptures including one of men's striped shirts against light boxes and another of zippers. Through Oct. 11. (Caren Golden, 526 W. 26th St. 212-727-8304.)

KEVIN ZUCKER
Two large paintings of the inside of a country house that are accompanied by smaller ones, of floral arrangements and architectural details. Through Oct. 18. (Mary Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 212-752-2929.)

"OPEN: NEW DESIGNS FOR PUBLIC SPACE"
From Oslo to Melbourne, Bogotá to Seoul, major cities across the world are erupting with innovative large-scale architectural projects. More than twenty of them—designed by reigning and rising stars like Norman Foster, Zaha Hadid, Will Alsop, and Craig Dykers—are presented in this lucid, dense installation, a sort of walk-through version of a book due to be published this fall. Couch potatoes may be tempted to wait for the latter, but impatient viewers will be rewarded with a range of architectural models, not to mention the pleasure of traipsing across the Van Alen Institute's barking, squeaking turquoise flooring. Through Oct. 31. (30 W. 22nd St. 212-924-7000.)

"TODAY'S MAN"
In a clever inversion of the dictum "Bigger is better," the gallery installs more than fifty small-scale works by and about men. Portraiture dominates, from a gem of an Alex Katz canvas, from 1985, of three nattily dressed friends to Richard Phillips's black-and-silver drawing of the rapper Curtis Jackson (he looks like a surly extra from "Pirates of the Caribbean"). The only intimation that size matters is a sculpture in the center of the gallery, a bronze bust by Marco Boggia Sella depicting a man with the kind of nose they used to call strong. Through Sept. 13. (John Connelly Presents, 526 W. 26th St. 212-337-9563.)

GALLERIES—SOHO

STAN BRODSKY
Colored abstractions based on journeys through coastal California and the South of France. Through Sept. 30. (June Kelly, 591 Broadway. 212-226-1660.)

ELE D'ARTAGNAN
Brightly colored works in the naïve-art style, filled with sensual private symbolism. Through Oct. 15. (KS Art, 73 Leonard St. 212-219-9918.)

"KNOCKABOUT"
In "Tide Paranoia," a bright-orange bottle of laundry detergent rotates discreetly near the gallery ceiling, where you might expect to find a security camera. This work, by Mathieu Mercier, is just one of the casual visual pranks in this whimsical group show. Oli Watt covers a schoolroom desk with a colorful mosaic of chewed gum (it looks like a slapdash Tom Friedman), while a video by Scott Wolniak puts a new twist on Action painting, as the artist tries to render an industrial landscape from the back of a speeding flatbed truck. Through Sept. 13. (Spencer Brownstone, 39 Wooster St. 212-334-3455.)

GALLERIES—THE BRONX

PATRICIA CRONIN
The genteel, well-tended lanes of Woodlawn Cemetery, lined with Greek Revival family mausoleums, don't see much new construction. So when the sculptor Patricia Cronin, under the auspices of Deitch Projects, pulled up to the corner of Prospect and Walnut Avenues with a marble sculpture of herself in bed with her partner, the painter Deborah Kass, her monument to the living stood out. The machine-carved, hand-finished work, patterned after nineteenth-century memorial statuary, shows Cronin on her back with Kass at her side. Their curls mingle on a single crooked pillow, and their legs nestle under a softly draping sheet, which doesn't keep fall leaves from collecting at their sides, or prevent a birdbath-like puddle from forming in the central hollow at their hipbones. Through eternity. (Webster Ave. at 233rd St. 718-920-0500.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

PHILIP-LORCA DI CORCIA
A mini-retrospective that coincides with the publication of "A Storybook Life," a collection of twenty-five years' worth of the influential artist's most personal work. The show opens with a portly man asleep in bed, surrounded by a sad-faced woman on the television screen, a Teddy bear, and

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An untitled photograph from Zwelethu Mthethwa's "Sugar Cane" series, to be shown at the first I.C.P. Triennial.

a half-full glass of wine. It closes with the same man in an open casket, surrounded by thousands of flowers in a pink-tinged funeral home. Although diCorcia used his family in many of his staged photographs, the narrative is illusory, more dreamlike than autobiographic. DiCorcia's images can be unsettling (babies cry alone, people appear ill), poignant, or even funny. It might not be diCorcia's own Pinto that has been left overnight atop a hydraulic lift, or his child who is playing next to a forest fire, or his grandmother who has decided to walk away from her wheelchair, but this master of pinpoint lighting and of cinematic detail certainly tells a compelling story. Through Oct. 11. (Pace Wildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000.)

ARNO RAFAEL MINKKINEN
Since the mid-seventies, this Finnish-American artist has been showing self-portraits in which his contorted nude body seems to disappear into lakes or behind trees. The graphic, surrealistic images—in one his hands and feet, as if in a game of Twister, seem to float on a lake—muse on the human connection to nature while challenging the viewer to work out the physical demands. The beautifully printed black-and-white pictures (Minkkinen was a student of Harry Callahan and Aaron Siskind) are not digitally manipulated in any way, although the arrangements of his body strain credulity. Through Oct. 4. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave. 212-262-5050.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—The first Triennial of photography organized by I.C.P. curators, devoted to work by more than fifty photographers (with a few video makers thrown into the mix), explores these artists' takes on the idea of the interactions among strangers. Rineke Dijkstra, best known for her photographs of awkward teen-agers in their swimsuits at the beach, here shows a video of a teen-ager singing her heart out to the Backstreet Boys hit "I Wanna Be with You." Justine Kurland, who has posed adolescent girls in woodland dreamscapes, presents recent portraits done in American communes. Younger artists such as Zwelethu Mthethwa and Yto Barrada will mix with Joel Sternfeld, Shirin Neshat, Susan Meiselas, and Beat Streuli, who was commissioned to create portraits of pedestrians lost in their own worlds, which will stare from the museum's street-level windows. Opens Sept. 12. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays 10 to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

Short List

MILTON ROGOVIN
New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. 212-873-3400. Through Oct. 12.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Sept. 10 at 10 A.M. and 2: The house steps quietly into the fall season with an auction of "arcade" furniture, carpets, and decorative art works. ♦ Sept. 13 at 9:30 A.M. and 2: A sale of wine. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
Sept. 16 at 10 A.M., 2, and 4: A three-day Asian sale begins with an auction of Japanese and Korean art works. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

DOYLE
Sept. 16 at 10 A.M. and 2: F. Gordon Morrill, with his wife, Elizabeth, devoted much of his life to supporting music and the arts from their perch at Casa Morrill in Florence, but his collection of Chinese porcelain and Chinese export porcelain—one of the last great collections in private hands—was a personal passion of equal significance. The sale, a plum for this respected smaller house, will feature some sixty lots of blue-and-white and armorial export porcelain in the morning and a selection of Yuan, Ming, and Qing porcelain (including a large Yuan-dynasty dragon dish expected to bring at least seven hundred thousand dollars) in the afternoon. (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
Mark Lamos's exquisite staging of **"Madama Butterfly"**—one of those "beloved" older productions that actually merit their reputation—remains one of the best reasons to go to City Opera; the gentle modulations of Robert Wierzel's pastel lighting accentuate the delicacy in Puccini's opulent score. With Chen Sue Panariello (in the title role), Mika Shigematsu, Brandon Jovanovich, and Michael Corvino; George Manahan conducts. (Sept. 12 at 8 and Sept. 14 at 1:30.) ♦ Francesca Zambello's new production of **"Alcina,"** one of the gems of the Handelian repertory, with Christine Goerke, Lauren Skuce, Katharine Goeldner, Jennifer Dudley, Keith Jameson, and Joshua Winograde; Daniel Beckwith. (Sept. 13 at 1:30.) ♦ James Robinson—the author of some of City Opera's most imaginative recent productions—returns to the company to direct a new staging of **"Lucia di Lammermoor."** His star, Jennifer Welch-Babidge (making her company début in the title role), is six months pregnant, a challenge that Robinson has incorporated into the story. She leads a cast that also includes Jorge Antonio Pita (as Edgardo) and Stephen Powell (as Enrico); Manahan. (Sept. 13 at 8 and Sept. 16 at 7:30.) (New York State Theatre. 212-870-5570.)

AMATO OPERA
If any opera suits the Amato's feisty, old-East Village spirit it's **"La Bohème,"** the opening produc-

tion of the company's fifty-sixth season, in which the intimate stage will somehow accommodate not only the frozen garret of Mimì and Rodolfo but the crowds of the Café Momus as well. Anthony Amato, as always, directs and conducts. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. Sept. 13 at 7:30 and Sept. 14 at 2:30.)

CONCERTS IN TOWN

MUSICIANS FOR HARMONY
Topnotch players from the worlds of classical (such as the Juilliard and Shanghai Quartets) and world music (the legendary Iraqi oud player Omar Bashir, in his North American début, and the Musique sans Frontières ensemble) gather at Merkin Concert Hall for the organization's second annual concert for peace, held in commemoration of 9/11. (129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Sept. 10 at 7:30.)

BARGEMUSIC
Sept. 11 at 9 A.M.: A free concert with the American Brass Quintet, offered in memory of the victims of 9/11, is the first of this weekend's events at the barge, which will run on a slightly altered schedule. ♦ Sept. 11 at 7:30 and Sept. 14 at 4: The A.B.Q. performs brass-quintet music by Brahms (arrangements of three of the Chorale Preludes for Organ, Op. 122, the composer's rarely heard final works), Eric Ewazen, and Gilbert Amy, along with a suite of seventeenth-century dances. ♦ Sept. 12-13 at 7:30: An all-Beethoven recital offered by the veteran pianist Jerome Lowenthal. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

MIDTOWN CONCERTS: ARTEK
Gwendolyn Toth's renowned early-music band performs a midday concert of sacred music by Monteverdi, Schütz, and Castello; the tenor Philip Anderson, the gambist Lisa Terry, and other musicians join Toth, on organ and harpsichord. (St. Francis of Assisi Church, 135 W. 31st St. Sept. 11 at 1:15. No tickets necessary.)

TRINITY CHURCH: "A SONG TO DAVID"
On 9/11, Trinity Church's eighty-year-old Aeolian-Skinner pipe organs were destroyed by dust and debris from Ground Zero, only six hundred feet away. Trinity marks the second anniversary of the tragedy with a memorial concert that will introduce the church's "long-term interim replacement" instrument, a revolutionary electronic machine created by Marshall Ogletree Associates, which is powered by more than ten computers working in tandem. But the technology exists to serve the art: Trinity's director of music, Owen Burdick, will lead the Trinity Choir (with the organist Dean Billmeyer) in a performance of William Albright's "A Song to David," its text a stormy testimonial of religious mania composed by the eighteenth-century poet Christopher Smart after a spell in a mental institution. Albright was a splendid organ virtuoso himself, and both Billmeyer and the instrument should get a thorough workout. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. Sept. 11 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.)

ZANKEL HALL OPENING FESTIVAL
Carnegie Hall's long-awaited new performance space, situated directly below Isaac Stern Auditorium, opens its doors at last. Zankel's programming aims for a BAM-like mix of contemporary classical music, world music, performance works, and more adventurous jazz than you'd find at Lincoln Center, all showcased in an impressive new state-of-the-art auditorium seating more than six hundred; the opening weekend is a good indication of the inspired heterodoxy to come. (For further listings, see Night Life.) Some highlights follow. Sept. 12 at 7: The California-based minimalist John Adams travels east to conduct an inaugural concert (featuring the violinist Jennifer Koh) of Ives, Harrison, Adès, and Salonen, played by the impromptu Zankel Band. ♦ Sept. 14 at 1: Theatre of Voices, with electronic backup, offers music spanning eight centuries, from an anonymous medieval work to a piece by Steve Reich and the New York première of Ingram Marshall's haunting "Hymnodic Delays." ♦ Sept. 14 at 4: The gritty, virtuoso pianist-composer Frederic Rzewski plays an all-Rzewski recital that includes movements from his recent epic novel for the piano, "The Road." ♦ Sept. 14 at 8: Meredith Monk, the avant-garde vocal legend, brings her eponymous ensemble to the hall to perform a selection of her works. ♦ Sept. 15 at 7:30: The Emerson String Quartet offers a program of Haydn, Ned Rorem (the Fourth Quartet, which was composed for the Emerson), and Dvořák (the Piano Quintet, with Emanuel Ax). (Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS
Jens Nygaard's squally but beneficent spirit lives on in the chamber series named after the starving-artists orchestra he maintained for more than twenty years. Its opening program of the season, true to form, mixes the familiar (Tchaikovsky's string sextet "Souvenir de Florence") with the obscure (a Rossini quartet for flute and strings and the American première of the Clarinet Quintet by Meyerbeer). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. 212-799-1259. Sept. 15 at 2 and 7:30.)

OUT OF TOWN

SOUTH SHORE MUSIC SERIES
Westport's chamber-music series closes its seventieth season with a program of Brahms (the Trio in C Minor, Op. 101), Mendelssohn, and Paul Moravec performed by Trio Solisti, an aptly named piano trio made up of three imaginative solo-rank musicians (the violinist Maria Bachmann, the cellist Alexis Pia Gerlach, and the pianist Jon Klibonoff) well versed in music both old and new. (Saugatuck Congregational Church, 245 Post Rd. E., Westport, Conn. 866-776-8745. Sept. 12 at 8.)

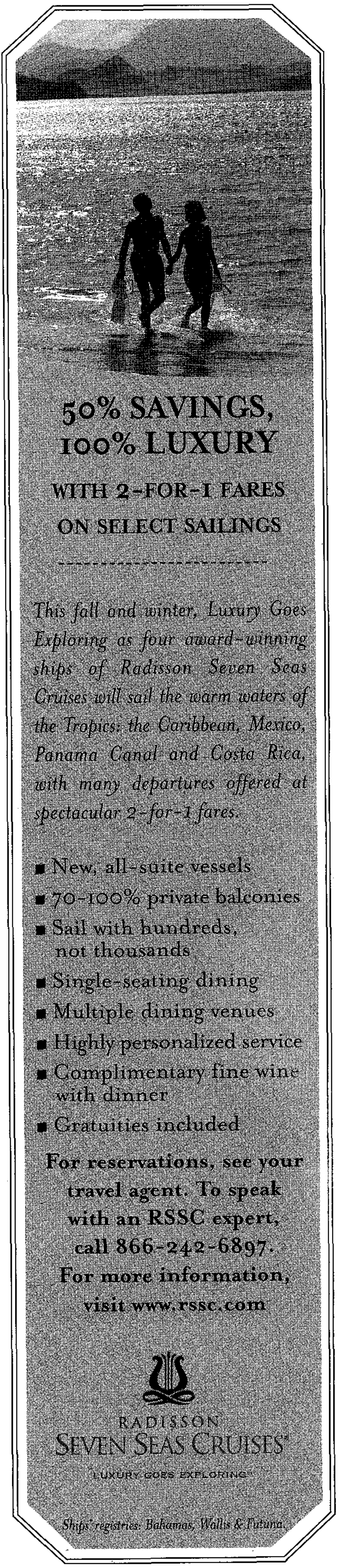
TANNERY POND CONCERTS
Another talented threesome, the Sequenza Piano Trio, offers a slate of trios by Beethoven (the "Archduke"), Ravel, and Bright Sheng in Christian Steiner's deliberately small-scale, high-end series, given in an acoustically pristine 1838 tannery. (Darrow School, Route 20, New Lebanon, N.Y. 888-820-1696. Sept. 13 at 6.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
Sept. 14 at 6: Katy Lederer offers selections from her memoir, "Poker Face: A Girlhood Among Gamblers," and Peter Blauner, the author of such novels as "Slow Motion Riot" and "The Intruder," reads from his fiction. (Barbès, 376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Sept. 14 at 7: The writers Jacqueline Carey and A. M. Homes read from their work. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Sept. 15-16 at 7: The Bowery Poetry Club celebrates its first anniversary with a two-day party that includes readings by Sapphire, Maggie Estep, Eric Bogosian, Anne Waldman, and many other writers. (308 Bowery. 212-614-0505.)

TALKS
Sept. 16 at 6:30: The baseball writers Roger Angell, Claire Smith, Tom Verducci, Steve Wulf, and Marty Appel discuss the national pastime. (American Folk Art Museum, 45 W. 53rd St. 212-265-1040.) ♦ Sept. 16 at 7:30: The PEN American Center and the Department of Comparative Literature at N.Y.U. bring together Susan Sontag, Ammiel Alcalay, Michael Henry Heim, Michael Hofmann, and Steven Wasserman for a discussion about the politics of translation. (Kimmel Student Center, New York University, 60 Washington Sq. S. For reservations, call 212-334-1660, ext. 107.)

CANDLELIGHT VIGIL
Sept. 10 at 6:45: September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, an advocacy group founded by relatives of victims of 9/11, marks the second anniversary of the terrorist attacks with a march from Union Square to the World Trade Center site. (For more information, call 646-408-5676 or visit www.peacefultomorrows.org.)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MOVIES OPENING

CABIN FEVER
A horror film in which a group of college friends in an isolated cabin stalk each other after one of them contracts a flesh-eating virus. Directed by Eli Roth. Opening Sept. 12.

COLD CREEK MANOR
In Mike Figgis's thriller, Sharon Stone and Dennis Quaid play a New York City couple who move to a house in the country, where they discover secrets about the family who lived there before them. Opening Sept. 19.

DUMMY
The début comedy of the writer-director Greg Pritikin tells the story of a suburban malcontent (Adrien Brody) who becomes a ventriloquist. With Milla Jovovich and Illeana Douglas. Opening Sept. 12. (Lincoln Square and Village Theatre VII.)

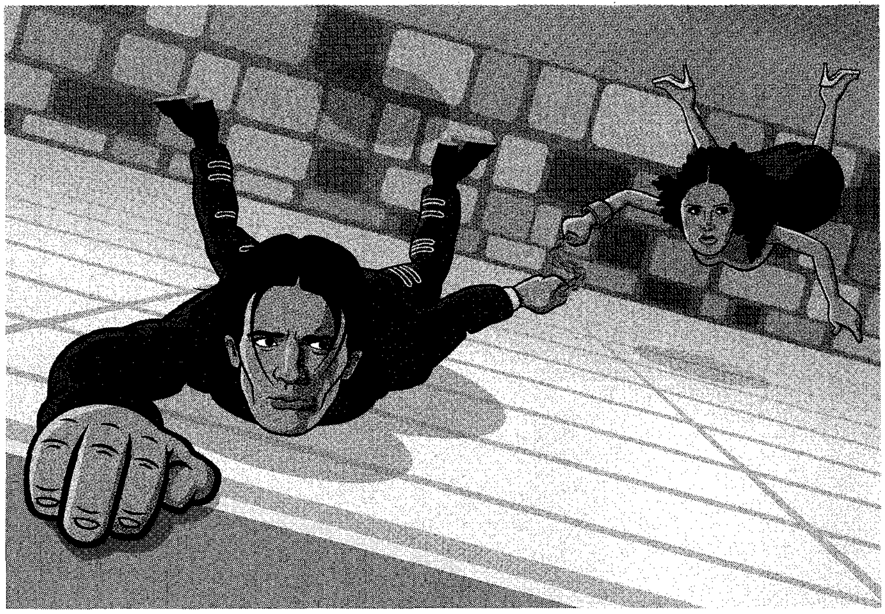
FORBIDDEN PHOTOGRAPHS: THE LIFE AND WORK OF CHARLES GATEWOOD
A documentary about the San Francisco photographer and anthropologist, who studies American underground subcultures such as bikers and pagans. Opening Sept. 12. (Cinema Village.)

LOST IN TRANSLATION
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Sept. 12. (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

MATCHSTICK MEN
Ridley Scott directed this drama with Nicolas Cage as an obsessive-compulsive con artist who learns that he has a teen-age daughter (Alison Lohman). With Sam Rockwell. Opening Sept. 12.

MILLENNIUM ACTRESS
An *anime* film from the director Satoshi Kon ("Perfect Blue"), in which a documentary filmmaker searches for a screen star who vanished at the peak of her career. Opening Sept. 12.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN MEXICO
The third film in Robert Rodriguez's "El Mariachi" series has the hero (Antonio Banderas) attempting to foil an assassination plot. The cast includes Johnny Depp, Salma Hayek, Rubén Blades, Willem Dafoe, and Mickey Rourke. Opening Sept. 12.



Antonio Banderas and Salma Hayek in "Once Upon a Time in Mexico."

MICHAEL WELDON

PASSIONADA
A drama set in the Portuguese-American community of New Bedford, Massachusetts, about the life of a working single mother (Sofia Milos) who sings fado at night. Opening Sept. 12.

THE SAME RIVER TWICE
Robb Moss's documentary looks at the lives of a group of idealistic river guides from the nineteen-seventies. Opening Sept. 10. (Film Forum.)

SO CLOSE
A Hong Kong action film that involves a computer mogul, a family vendetta, and a pair of female assassins. Directed by Corey Yuen. In Cantonese and Mandarin. Opening Sept. 12.

FILM NOTES

AMERICAN SPLENDOR
Well, it's different. Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini, directing together, have made a drama-documentary in which the drama and the documentary look at each other but don't touch. The movie is about Harvey Pekar, a real and rusted-up gentleman from Cleveland. He works as a filing clerk, and his experiences have long been the subject of a comic strip, illustrated by—among others—Robert Crumb. So we get a good dose of Harvey. But we get an even better and funnier dose of Paul Giamatti, who plays an alternative Harvey, and who is framed, or sometimes drawn, in fond imitation of a comic book—the implication being that even the cruddiest lives can, in sympathetic hands, acquire shape and grace. The story, such as it is, moves from Harvey the record collector to Harvey the cancer sufferer to Harvey the chat-show guest. There is terrific supporting work from Hope Davis as Mrs. Pekar and from Judah Friedlander as Harvey's profoundly unusual friend Toby. Mild fame may have patronized these folks, but the movie pays them a comic homage that feels flattering, fast-witted, and true.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 8/18 & 25/03.) (BAM Rose Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

AMERICAN WEDDING
After three dates, the "American Pie" franchise has become a dull and familiar affair. Jesse Dylan's lacklustre direction strands the actors in a series of raunchy, stale bachelor-party gags, and the original ensemble cast has been shaved down to the bare minimum. (That should have been a warning.) Of those who chose to return, only the reliable Eugene Levy manages some gifted bits.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

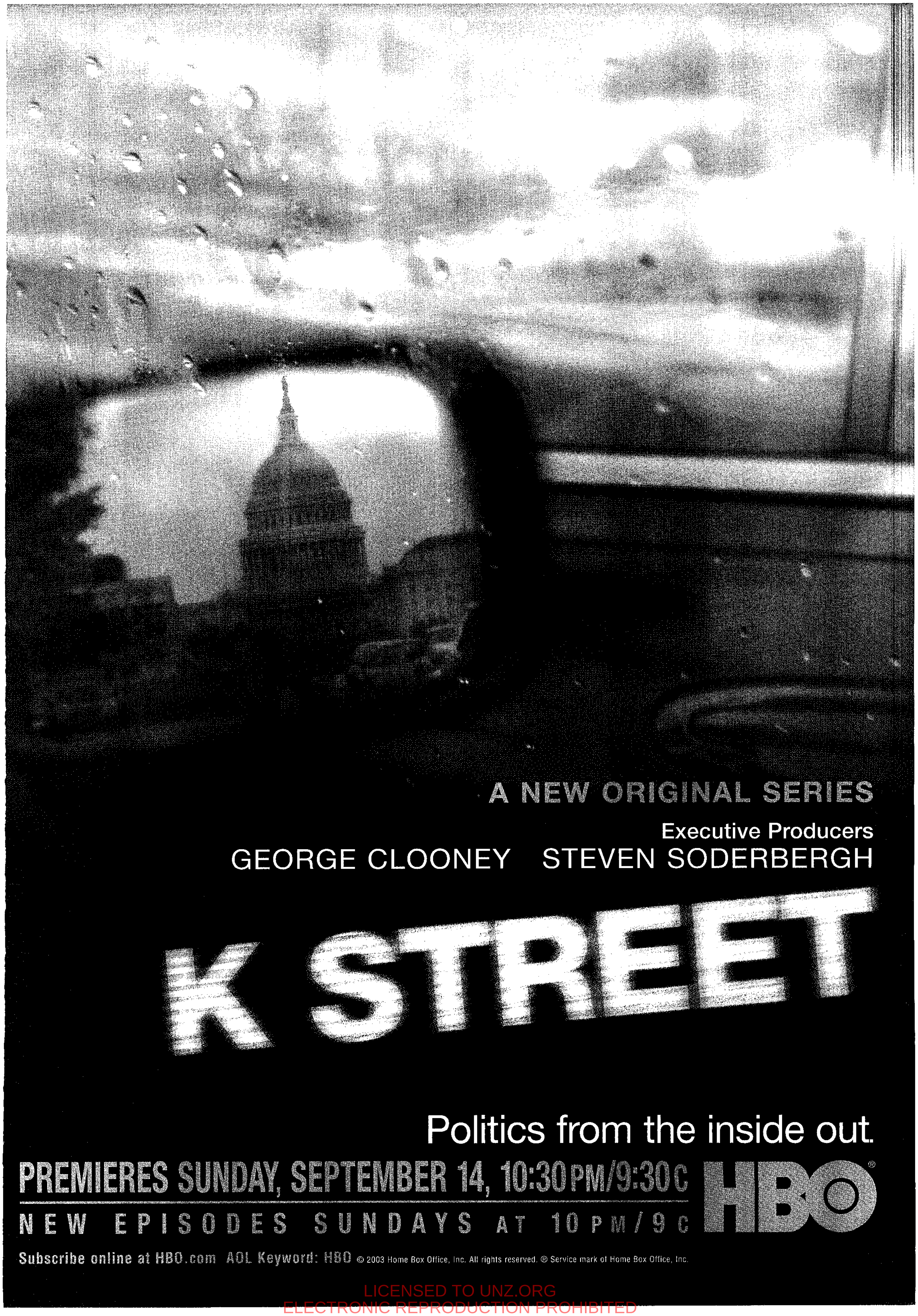
THE BATTLE OF SHAKER HEIGHTS
Not as bad as you might think, considering the infighting captured on "Project Greenlight 2," the television show that chronicled the making of this movie. Throughout the series, the tag-team directors Kyle Rankin and Efram Potelle locked horns with the producer Chris Moore about whether the film should make 'em laugh or make 'em cry. Moore dropped vague comments like "I'm worried about the melodrama," while Rankin and Potelle huddled around the camera like twins lost in their own language. In the film itself, Shia LaBeouf is the young star and the hero, and he's very good at acting raw and confused—imagine a Mark Ruffalo, Jr. He also gets off a few good lines, but the coming-of-age story feels so jumbled up and patched together that it never acquires any emotional coherence. Then there are the little things, like the palm trees that grow in Ohio. But if you saw the show you probably have to see the movie, so think of your ticket price as a donation for "Project Greenlight 3."—*Michael Agger* (Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

DIRTY PRETTY THINGS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, and Sunshine Cinema.)

LE DIVORCE
A Merchant-Ivory movie set in the present, which makes for a change. This one is the tale of two sisters: Isabel (Kate Hudson), who flies to Paris to visit her sister Roxy (Naomi Watts), who has married a dodgy Frenchman. Cue any number of cross-cultural collisions, as our hopeful young Americans—today's Daisy Millers—become ensnared in the oily grasp of old Europe. Isabel finds herself in bed with Edgar (Thierry Lhermitte), who has the decency to look faintly embarrassed about it. The movie contemplates sex, as well as abortion, suicide, and mental instability, but the director, James Ivory, seems fatally undecided as to whether such matters are worthy of solemn consideration or mere backdrops to a bit of fun. The moral of the piece, finally, appears to be "Don't marry out of your tribe," which is nice to know in these days of international suspicion. Wasted actors include Stockard Channing, Sam Waterston, Bebe Neuwirth, Glenn Close, and Matthew Modine; that's a lot of waste. Leslie Caron offers as pure a definition of grande dame as you are likely to find.—*A.L.* (8/18 & 25/03) (Paris and Union Square.)

FREAKY FRIDAY
The beloved Disney teen movie from 1976 gets a power-pop makeover. As in the original, mother and daughter magically switch bodies, and the best parts are when they put each other's lives through the paces. The saucer-eyed Lindsay Lohan, as the daughter, morphs from a slouching rocker into a perfect-posture girl, a Junior League aspirant set loose in high school. Jamie Lee Curtis has the more difficult assignment, contorting her adult body into the ungainly angles of adolescence. She pulls off the transformation with precision, and both she and Lohan grace their scenes with moments of dead-on physical parody. Together, they provide a delightful double take on the old mother-to-daughter mantra: Act your age.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

THE MAGDALENE SISTERS
A scalding new picture from Peter Mullan, set in Ireland in the nineteen-sixties. Three girls are sent to a Magdalene Asylum—one of a network of institutions to which wayward young women were consigned by their disapproving families. The asylums were run by Roman Catholic nuns; in this case, the presiding spirit is Sister Bridget (Geraldine McEwan), who counts her money in secret



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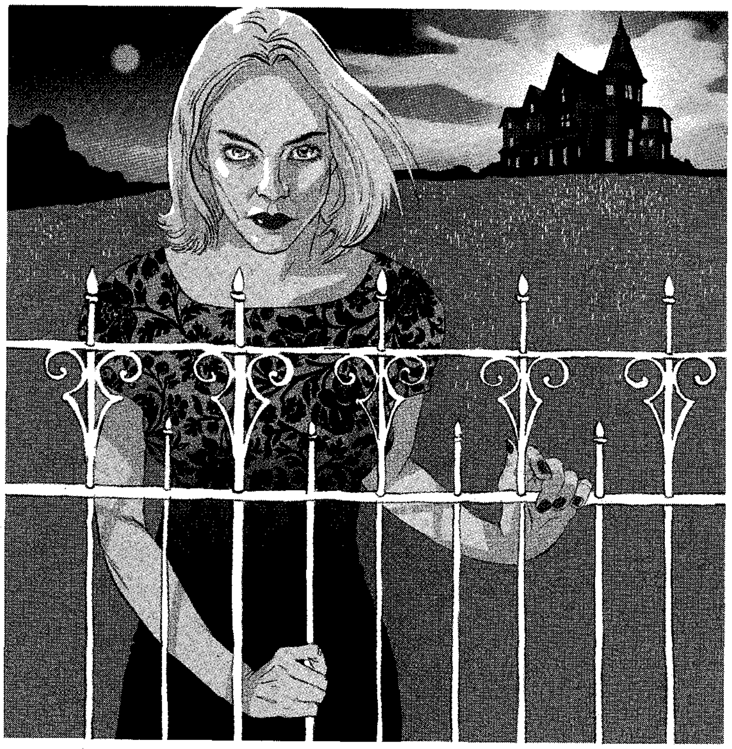
and speaks to her charges with a forked tongue. Finally, the trio of friends—played by Anne-Marie Duff, Dorothy Duffy, and Nora-Jane Noone—make their escape, as if from a prisoner-of-war camp. The system was certainly crushing, but it has inspired Mullan—a fine actor, whose previous film as director, "Orphans," was a scabrous Glaswegian comedy—to deliver his most intemperate work, which lashes out at the Catholic Church with the same hardness of heart that Sister Bridget and her colleagues display in their running of the asylum. You come away from the movie not just convinced but cowed.—*A.L.* (8/11/03) (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 2, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)



Sharon Stone in "Cold Creek Manor," opening September 19.

TOMER HANUKA

OPEN RANGE

A slow-moving, traditional Western shot in the high, green valleys of the Canadian Rockies, a darkly beautiful landscape that unfurls across the screen like velvet. Robert Duvall and Kevin Costner are "freegrazers"—cattlemen who roam through the land with their herds—and Michael Gambon is the viciously corrupt big landowner who wants to exterminate them. There's nothing terribly striking about the film, but in a time of hyperkinetic spectacle, the lethargy of "Open Range" is almost soothing. With Annette Bening as the voice of civilization—a doctor's assistant waiting for a man.—*David Denby* (9/1/03) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: THE CURSE OF THE BLACK PEARL

As the pirate captain Jack Sparrow, Johnny Depp does not so much walk as sashay into a scene, and he wears more eyeshadow than Tammy Faye Bakker. He gives this exuberant family entertainment an amiable sheen of silliness (the performance offers diverse echoes of W. C. Fields, Toshiro Mifune, and Keith Richards on a bender). Depp leaves a lot of the duelling and all of the lovemaking to Orlando Bloom (from "The Lord of the Rings"), who plays a young blacksmith with pirate blood in his veins, a fellow much loved by the daughter of the British governor of a Caribbean colony, Keira Knightley (she has a thing for swashbucklers). The movie is based on the famous old Disneyland ride, and it's good, cheesy fun, complete with tall ships, battles at sea, and accursed pirates who turn into skeletons in moonlight. As Barbossa, the pirate who deposed Captain Jack, Geoffrey Rush eyeballs his victims and stretches out his syllables in the taunting manner of Robert Newton, who specialized in stump-legged scoundrels fifty years ago.—*D.D.* (7/28/03) (Battery Park 16, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SEABISCUIT

Gary Ross's adaptation of Laura Hillenbrand's 2001 best-seller about the miraculous racehorse of the nineteen-thirties has been shaped as a national epic—not as a good story but as *the* good story. The horse, knobby-kneed and perverse, comes from behind and knocks off the more famous Thoroughbreds of the era. He is saved from obscurity by an unlikely trio: Charles Howard (Jeff Bridges), a millionaire auto salesman with a venturesome streak; Tom Smith (Chris Cooper), a down-and-out trainer, practically a relic of the nineteenth century; and Johnny (Red) Pollard (Tobey Maguire), an embittered, not terribly talented boxer and jockey. The horse becomes such a popular favorite that, as Hillenbrand and Ross tell it, he redeems the millions of unemployed "forgotten men" in the Depression. In case we don't get the point, there are solemn interludes of photomontage accompanied by narration from the historian David McCullough. The Oscar-hungry movie stamps itself with a seal of approval rather than simply telling its story. Much of it, however, is beautifully made in conservative-humanist style, and the races are thrilling. With William H. Macy in a great bit as a poetizing radio announcer.—*D.D.* (8/4/03) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE SECRET LIVES OF DENTISTS

In Alan Rudolph's marital drama, a suburban dentist (Campbell Scott) who shares his practice with his wife (Hope Davis) suspects her of having an affair. Scott's character is a model of repression—he doesn't want to know anything about his wife's infidelity that would cause him to act—and the film plays out as a maddening rush of imagined scenarios (the writer Craig Lucas invests his script with more than a few comic moments to goose the inaction along). The outstanding performances of the two leads do much to tether Rudolph's loose style. The film is steeped in a queasy emotional containment that nails the experience of true domestic dread.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, and 72nd Street East.)

SPELLBOUND

Jeffrey Blitz's charming documentary follows eight elementary students competing in the 1999 National Spelling Bee; he rode the bus to school with them, interviewed their teachers, checked out their rooms, and, in one case, listened while a kid talked like a robot. The sample of children is appropriately diverse—in region, in race, in the intensity of their preparations. Some of their parents see the spelling bee as representing the immigrant dream of America in miniature while others seem amazed at the intensity of their nerdy offspring. The competitions are tense, and Blitz cobbles together a series of heartbreaking reaction shots of errant spellers. His direction shows a clever, occasionally flippant, selection of detail—the dog-eared unabridged dictionaries, the congratulatory sign posted outside Hooters, the prodigy who signs his autographs "Trust in Jesus."—*M.A.* (Quad Cinema.)

STEP INTO LIQUID

A clever name for a classic surfing documentary. Dana Brown's movie has the exotic locations, breezy narration, uplifting stories, and cracked surfer wisdom you expect from the genre. What sets the movie apart is the astonishing sequence that ends it, in which a team of surfers use Jet Skis to catch the sixty-foot waves they find in the middle of the ocean. Other notable interludes include the guys who surf the freezing, muddy waters of Lake Michigan and the professional women surfers who test their mettle at Tahiti's Teahupo'o, dubbed "the Wave with Teeth" because it breaks over a shallow coral reef.—*M.A.* (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, and Empire 25.)

SWIMMING POOL

Charlotte Rampling gives another outstanding performance, this time as an uptight mystery writer who accepts an offer from her publisher to use his house in the South of France for some inspiration. When his sexy daughter (the luscious Ludivine Sagnier) shows up uninvited, a slow-burning and deliberately abstract mystery is set in motion. The director François Ozon (who's worked with Rampling before, in the very similar "Under the Sand") crafts a seductive puzzle that may have audiences wondering, in a pleasant way, what it was that they just saw. In French and English.—*B.D.* (Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

TAKING SIDES

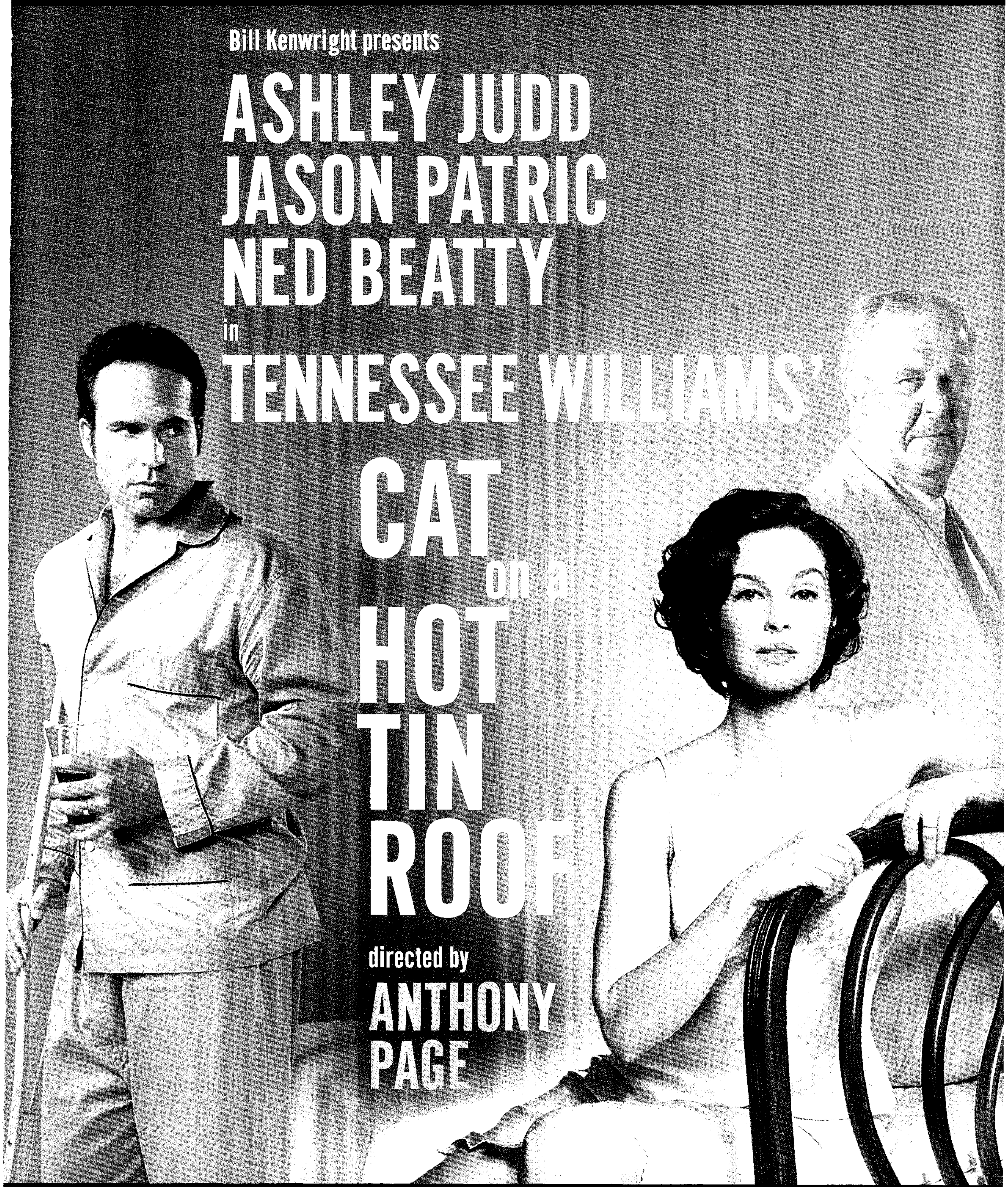
After the Second World War, the German conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler (played, though not impersonated, by Stellan Skarsgård) is questioned at length by Steve Arnold (Harvey Keitel), an American major, whose task is to "find him guilty." Furtwängler had stayed in place through the rise and fall of the Nazi regime, leading the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestras in concerts that were not just sanctioned but encouraged. Even now, listeners are forced to wonder what role Furtwängler fulfilled for Hitler: lackey, dupe, or cultural front man? In the movie, he defends himself as a subtle resister; the screenwriter, Ronald Harwood, and the director, István Szabó, set up a hot, claustrophobic head-to-head between the accuser and the accused. The result is so conscious of its contribution to the moral debate that it forgets to wake up as a movie, and the shots of a ruined Berlin are a perfunctory joke. Keitel is an annoying presence, but maybe that's the point: Arnold is a brute, a bigot, and a philistine, but, when it comes to the sins of the maestro, he's right.—*A.L.* (9/8/03) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THIRTEEN

Evan Rachel Wood is Trace, a Los Angeles junior-high-schooler going nuts from being thirteen. Nikki Reed is Evie, the fast, knowing, cat-eyed girl Trace develops a crush on. The two cruise the shops on Melrose Avenue, buying or stealing what they need, and they dress for school like baby whores. This sensational (in both senses) independent feature, directed by the former set designer Catherine Hardwicke and shot by ace cameraman Elliot Davis, is an emotionally coherent work about incoherent longing—the girls abuse themselves and others and run from one extreme emotion to another. The movie is so absorbing and intelligent that you don't feel repelled by the destructiveness of what they do. With Holly Hunter in a brave performance as Mel, Trace's forty-fiveish mother, who is herself a kind of teen-ager. Nikki Reed poured a lot of her own disasters into the script, which was written in collaboration with Hardwicke.—*D.D.* (9/1/03) (Beekman, Empire 25, 19th Street East 6, 62nd & Broadway, and Sunshine Cinema.)

THIS HAPPY BREED

A notable example of one of Noël Coward's genre specialties: the understated tribute to the British



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ASHLEY JUDD, who last starred on Broadway in the Roundabout Theatre Company's production of William Inge's *Picnic*, has starred in the films *The Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood, High Crimes, Frida, Someone Like You, Eye of the Beholder, Where the Heart Is, Double Jeopardy, Simon Birch, Kiss the Girls* and *Smoke and Heat.*

JASON PATRIC, who will be making his Broadway debut in *CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF*, has starred in the films *Narc, Your Friends and Neighbors, Sleepers, The Journey of August King, Geronimo: An American Legend, Rush, After Dark, My Sweet* and *The Lost Boys*. This Christmas, he will star opposite Dennis Quaid and Billy Bob Thornton in *The Alamo.*

NED BEATTY, who will recreate his critically acclaimed, Olivier Award-nominated West End portrayal of Big Daddy, was most recently seen on stage as Captain Andy in the National Tour of *Show Boat*, directed by Harold Prince. His many memorable film performances include roles in *Cookie's Fortune, Radioland Murders, Prelude To A Kiss, The Big Easy, Deliverance, Network* (Academy Award nomination), *All The President's Men* and *Nashville.* His numerous television credits include recurring roles in the series *Homicide* and *Roseanne.*

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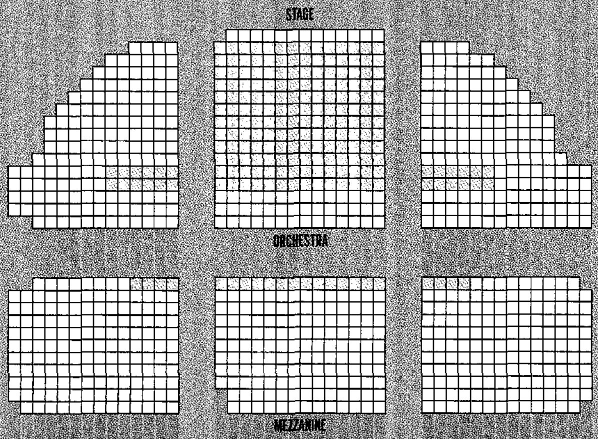

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national character. In this 1944 film, David Lean renders Coward's account of a lower-middle-class Clapham family between world wars with a funny, flinty sensitivity, toning down the play's overcalculated homespun rhetoric. Robert Newton imbues his Everyman patriarch with flashing-eyed vitality, igniting equal rapport with his wife (the incandescent Celia Johnson) and his best friend (the gutsy trouper Stanley Holloway). But what makes the movie work is Lean's contrasting use of dynamic shooting and editing with a lucid, fluid stagecraft to show the conflict between quotidian life and life at its extremes. When the family's "wild" daughter (the bold young Kay Walsh) walks out the front door in the dead of night just as her happy, inebriated father and his pal enter through the side, it's as perfect an expression of a poignant domestic rift as the Beatles' "She's Leaving Home." The film has lots of close-quarters domestic comedy, too, and an on-his-toes commonman performance from John Mills as Holloway's sailor son.—*Michael Sragow* (Gramercy Theatre; Sept. 13.)

TOUCHEZ PAS AU GRISBI
Jacques Becker's 1953 portrait of a stylish middle-aged thief named Max (the incomparable Jean Gabin) set the standard for the French underworld crime capers to follow, yet it retains a mellow kick all its own. Subplots slide away fluidly, like the skin of a cocktail onion; the picture starts *after* Max has made what he hopes will be his last big score. What's crucial proves to be his friendship with his longtime partner, Riton (René Dary), whose inability to age gracefully or to handle an unsatisfied mistress (the young Jeanne Moreau) puts their giant stash at risk. The movie overflows with comic, melancholy ruminations on mortality and sexual fatigue. When Max invites Riton to a swank secret apartment and lays out their plans along with wine and pâté, the sequence plays like a troubled honeymoon for a platonic male marriage. Yet the movie never falls into macho camp. The action is just as vicious as it has to be, and Becker pulls off one tough-guy surprise after another with masterly soft-shoe storytelling. Best of all, Gabin's performance is more than a star turn. He reveals how hard it is for a gangster to keep up a "class act." The co-stars include Lino Ventura in his film début as Max's nemesis; Jean Weiner's music does for the harmonica what the score for "The Third Man" did for the zither. In French.—*M.S.* (Film Forum; starting Sept. 5.)

TROUBLESOME CREEK: A MIDWESTERN
With a lot of patient craft, the co-directors of this frisky yet semi-tragic 1995 documentary, Jeanne Jordan and Steven Ascher, record the final months that Russel and Mary Jane Jordan spent on the Iowa farm that by 1990 had been in the family for almost a hundred and twenty-five years. The main attraction isn't the narration's lucid exposition of America's agricultural crises or the country's pastoral beauty. It's the embattled couple itself—which the co-directors would be glad to hear, since Jeanne Jordan is Russel and Mary Jane's youngest daughter and Ascher their son-in-law. The Iowans in this film present the same stoic face to the world as the Minnesotans in "Fargo" did and pepper their conversations with a similar number of "You betcha"s. The big difference is that Jordan and Ascher know that true stoic understatement is heroic—it contains emotion rather than covering for its absence. Russel comes up with the daring scheme at the center of the movie: he'll work the farm another year and then let his son Jim, who's been farming rented land, move in. It isn't surrender, it's a tactical retreat, and that distinction gives this film its feisty heart.—*M.S.* (Gramercy Theatre; Sept. 11.)

28 DAYS LATER
Another helpful development for the British Tourist Board. Danny Boyle's horror film, alternately savage and glum, shows London—and, by implication, most of England—destroyed by a fast-acting plague. Borne in the blood, it passes from one Brit to another with a single bite; soon, the capital is empty save for marauding zombies, leaving the unchewed—such as Jim (Cillian Murphy) and Selena (Naomie Harris)—to drift around, shop without paying, and never quite have sex. Any resemblance to normal teen-age behavior is entirely coincidental. Brendan Gleeson, much the best and cheeriest thing in the movie, plays a taxi-driver who helps them to leave town; from here on, Boyle and his screenwriter, Alex Garland, run out of gas. The picture is twitchy and annoying, flecked with blood and half-digested ideas, and too much is left unexplained. As a scheme for solving central London's traffic problem, though, it is unlikely to be surpassed.—*A.L.* (6/30/03) (Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

WHALE RIDER
The lush landscape of New Zealand is majestically filmed in the writer-director Niki Caro's drama about a young girl (the radiant Keisha Castle-Hughes) who must persuade her Maori tribe that she was born to be their leader. It's an empowerment fable, but done with disarming subtlety. Caro's film avoids the saccharine pitfalls of this sort of story, winning over the audience instead with a surefooted and inspiring sense of tradition.—*B.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema Village, Empire 25, 59th Street East Cinemas, and Kips Bay Theatre.)

ALSO PLAYING

CAMP
Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.

CAPTURING THE FRIEDMANS (6/2/03)
Village East Cinemas.

FINDING NEMO (6/9/03)
Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.

THE ITALIAN JOB (6/16/03)
42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.

MASKED AND ANONYMOUS
Village East Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Sept. 28: "From the Dream Life: American Movies and the Mythology of the 1960s." Screenings are free on Sept. 13 in honor of the museum's fifteenth anniversary. Sept. 13 at 1: "Primary" (1960, Robert Drew). ♦ Sept. 13 at 2: "Seven Days in May" (1964, John Frankenheimer). ♦ Sept. 13 at 4:30: "Dr. Strangelove" (1964, Stanley Kubrick). ♦ Sept. 14 at 1: "Major Dundee" (1964, Sam Peckinpah). ♦ Sept. 14 at 4: "The Chase" (1966, Arthur Penn). ♦ Repertory nights. Sept. 13-14 at 6:30: "Singin' in the Rain" (1952, Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Sept. 10 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "What's the Matter with Helen?" (1971, Curtis Harrington). ♦ Sept. 11 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "On the Town" (1949, Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen). ♦ Sept. 12-16 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Warrior of Light" (2001, Monika Treut; in German).

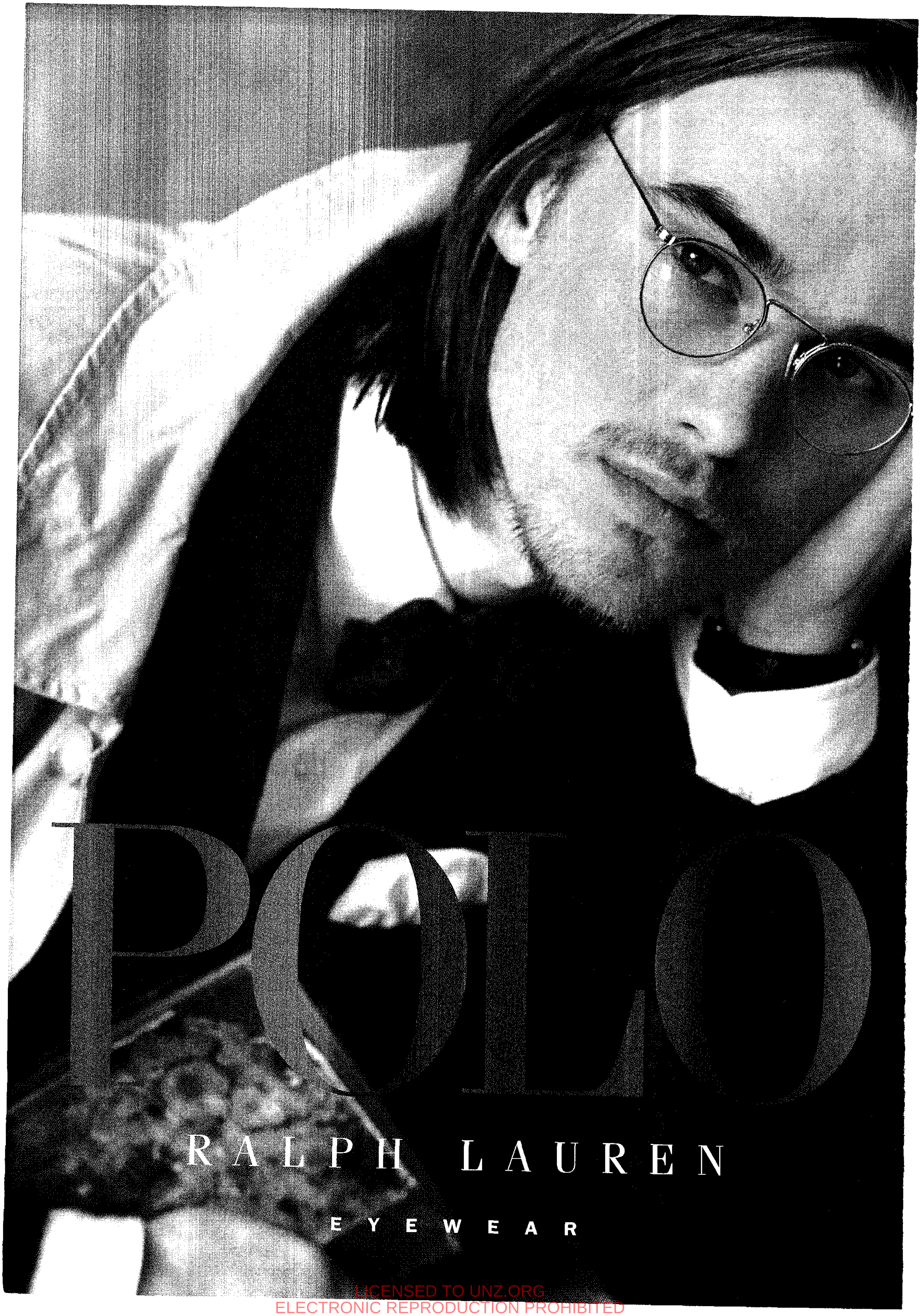
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through Sept. 18 at 1:30, 3:25, 5:30, 7:25, and 9:20: "Touchez Pas au Grisbi" (†).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—The films of the actress Jane Birkin. Sept. 16 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Kung-Fu Master" (1987, Agnès Varda; in French).

GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—Repertory films. Sept. 11 at 2: "Troublesome Creek: A Midwestern" (†). ♦ Sept. 11 at 4: "Painters Painting" (1972, Emile de Antonio). ♦ Sept. 11 at 6:15: "Sullivan's Travels" (1941, Preston Sturges). ♦ Starting Sept. 11: "John Mills: Forever English," a twenty-three-film retrospective of the actor's work. Sept. 11 at 8: "Hobson's Choice" (1954, David Lean). ♦ Sept. 12 at 2 and Sept. 13 at 1: "Forever England" (1935, Walter Forde). ♦ Sept. 12 at 4 and Sept. 14 at 2:45: "The Ghost Camera" (1933, Bernard Vorhaus). ♦ Sept. 12 at 6: "The Midshipmaid" (1932, Albert de Courville). ♦ Sept. 12 at 8: "Scott of the Antarctic" (1948, Charles Frend). ♦ Sept. 13 at 3: "In Which We Serve" (1942, Noël Coward). ♦ Sept. 13 at 6: "This Happy Breed" (†). ♦ Sept. 13 at 8:30 and Sept. 15 at 6: "Waterloo Road" (1945, Sidney Gilliat). ♦ Sept. 14 at 4:15: "We Dive at Dawn" (1943, Anthony Asquith). ♦ Sept. 14 at 6:15: "The Way to the Stars" (1945, Asquith). ♦ An evening with Paul Auster. Sept. 15 at 7:45: "Lulu on the Bridge" (1998, Auster).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. Sept. 12-13: "The Hunger" (1983, Tony Scott).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Sept. 28: "Latinbeat 2003," a survey of recent films from Latin America and a tribute to the Argentinean producer Lita Stantic. All films are in Spanish unless otherwise noted. Sept. 10 at 1: "Minimal Stories" (2002, Carlos Sorín). ♦ Sept. 10 at 3 and Sept. 12 at 5: "Camila" (1984, Maria Luisa Bemberg). ♦ Sept. 10 at 5 and 9:30 and Sept. 13 at 1: "The First Night" (2001, Luis Alberto Restrepo). ♦ Sept. 10 at 7, Sept. 11 at 5, and Sept. 12 at 1: "El Leyton" (2002, Gonzalo Justiniano). ♦ Sept. 11 at 1 and 7:10 and Sept. 12 at 3: "Copacabana" (2001, Carla Camurati; in Portuguese). ♦ Sept. 11 at 3, Sept. 12 at 7:15, and Sept. 14 at 8:45: "Stranger" (2003, Santiago Loza). ♦ Sept. 11 at 9:30: "Valentín" (2002, Alejandro Agresti). ♦ Sept. 12 at 9:15, Sept. 14 at 3:45, and Sept. 16 at 1: "The Bottom of the Ocean" (2003, Damián Szifron). ♦ Sept. 13 at 3 and Sept. 15 at 6:15: A program of short films about Cuban music. ♦ Sept. 13 at 6 and Sept. 15 at 1: "The Last Train" (2002, Diego Arzuaga). ♦ Sept. 13 at 8:15, Sept. 14 at 1, and Sept. 16 at 3: A second program of Cuban-music films. ♦ Sept. 14 at 6:10 and Sept. 15 at 9:10: A third program of Cuban-music films. ♦ Sept. 15 at 3: "To the Left of the Father" (2001, Luiz Fernando Carvalho; in Portuguese).


POLO
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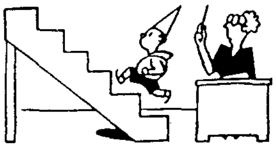
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
MAKING THE GRADE



The most striking thing about the sweeping federal educational reforms débuting this fall is how much they resemble, in language and philosophy, the industrial-efficiency movement of the early twentieth century. In those years, engineers argued that efficiency and productivity were things that could be measured and managed, and, if you had the right inventory and manufacturing controls in place, no widget would be left behind. Now we have "No Child Left Behind," in which Congress has set up a complex apparatus of sanctions and standards designed to compel individual schools toward steady annual improvement, with the goal of making a hundred per cent of American schoolchildren proficient in math and reading by 2014. It is hard to look at the new legislation and not share in its Fordist vision of the classroom as a brightly lit assembly line, in which curriculum standards sail down from Washington through a chute, and fresh-scrubbed, defect-free students come bouncing out the other end. It is an extraordinary vision, particularly at a time when lawmakers seem mostly preoccupied with pointing out all the things that government cannot do. The only problem, of course—and it's not a trivial one—is that children aren't widgets.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Suppose that you'd like to identify and reward those schools which do a good job of improving their students' performance. That's the kind of thing that the industrial-efficiency experts, with their emphasis on "best practices," always said was a sound procedure for companies looking to boost productivity—and the new school reformers have made this idea a centerpiece of their new regime. But how do you measure the performance of a school? It turns out to be surprisingly hard. North Carolina, for instance, instituted a program that every year recognizes the twenty-five schools in the state that record the greatest single-year jump in their students' test scores. As the educational researchers Thomas J. Kane and Douglas O. Staiger have pointed out, that honor is nearly always won by the smaller schools in the state. In fact, the state's smallest schools are about twenty-three times as likely to win performance awards as its largest schools. But North Carolina also identifies its worst-performing schools, and almost all of them are small schools, too. Does that mean that small schools are better learning environments or worse ones? Neither. It means that a lot of the ups and downs in a school's test scores are due to chance factors, such as the presence of a few really good or really poor students in a class, or the fact that on test day a few students may guess right on a couple of hard questions—and the smaller the school, the larger the role played by chance. As it turns out, most elementary schools are small, so it's hard to know, most of the time, whether George Washington Elementary is actually better than Thomas Jefferson Elementary or just—in that year—luckier. California has a multimillion-dollar award system, in which schools win cash grants from the state based on their performance on a 1,000-point scale called the Academic Performance Index. Thousands of dollars in state aid can rest on a one- or two-point swing on the A.P.I., and those scores are taken so seriously by parents that they can drive up local real-estate prices. But the average margin of error on the A.P.I. is something like twenty points, and for a small school it can be as much as fifty points. In a recent investigation, the Orange County *Register* concluded that, as a result, about a third of the money given out by the state might have been awarded to schools that simply got lucky.

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Or take something as seemingly straightforward as the "proficiency" standard set by the No Child Left Behind legislation. States are asked to pick their own math and reading tests, and then define as "proficient" all the students who pass them. The bill provides for stringent sanctions against schools that don't meet proficiency standards. But what do you have to score on a given test to be labelled "proficient"? That's not an easy question. One option is to use what's called the "contrasting groups" method. With this system, a large pool of teachers are asked to identify students they believe are proficient in a given subject; those students are then tested, and their grades stand as the proficiency range. Another method, called bookmark, involves ranking test questions in order of difficulty and having an educator mark the question that could reasonably be expected to divide the proficient students from the non-proficient. Then, there's the Jaeger-Mills method, in which educators assign precise difficulty ratings to test questions. According to a recent article by Robert L. Linn, of the University of Colorado, the state of Kentucky gave its middle-school students a reading test and analyzed the results using all three methods. With bookmark, 61 per cent of the students were considered proficient; with the contrasting-groups method, the pass rate was 22.7 per cent; and with Jaeger-Mills 10.5 per cent were proficient. When we say that we want American schoolchildren to be proficient in reading, which standard are we referring to?

One would think that a standard ought to be high enough so that every student has to try his or her best to reach it. By Missouri's standard, for example, just 8.3 per cent of that state's fourth graders are considered to be proficient in mathematics. But if schools are required, under threat of sanction, to raise their proficiency rates annually, it's fairly clear that they have a much greater incentive to switch to a more liberal interpretation of proficiency. Colorado uses a scoring interpretation that labels 79.5 per cent of its fourth graders proficient in math. It's possible, of course, that the children of Colorado are several orders of magnitude smarter than the children of Missouri. The more plausible explanation is that Colorado has found an easier way of leaving no child behind. If you want to develop a class of high jumpers, after all, you don't necessarily have to teach every student proper jumping technique. You can just lower the bar.

This can hardly be what Congress intended. It believed, correctly, that progress is not possible without standards. The truth is, however, that standards are not possible without meaningful systems of measurement, and learning cannot be measured as neatly and easily as the devotees of educational productivity would like. If schools were factories, America would have solved the education problem a century ago.

—*Malcolm Gladwell*

THE STUMP
DRAFT DODGING

Wesley Clark, the former NATO commander and current noncommittal Presidential candidate, may not be able to cry on demand, as John Kerry seemed to do the other day during a campaign stop in New Hampshire, but he does a mean dictator impression. Last week, for instance, during an appearance at N.Y.U., he reminisced at length about his diplomatic dealings with Slobodan Milosevic. "We would talk about things," Clark told the audience. "He'd say, 'General Clark, how is your family?' And I'd say, 'Well, my family's fine. How is your family, Mr. President?' " Clark switched accents, from Arkansan to Slobodan. " 'Is problem,' " he growled. " 'You know my daughter is not with husband anymore. Is difficult. My son, he is race-car driver in Greece. He's very popular young man. And is difficult for his mother not to worry about him.' "

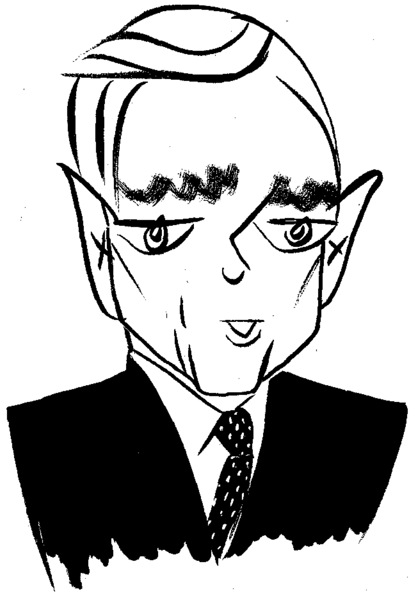
General Clark was speaking as a guest of the Wagner School for Public Service and of the Oxonian Society, a fledgling organization devoted to serving "graduates and supporters of Oxford University living in the tri-state area," of whom there are apparently several thousand. Prior to his address, Clark, who attended Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar back in 1966, mingled with two or three dozen Society members at a makeshift cocktail party outside the auditorium. "Hi, I'm Wes Clark," he said as he shook hands and locked eyes with each person. "What college were you at?" As often as not, the answer turned out to be M.I.T. or Wharton, instead of Queen's or All Souls, prompting Clark to ask, "So what makes you an Oxonian?" and "You're not from Oxford, either?" The Society, he was told, welcomes Ivy Leaguers and other similarly enterprising New Yorkers. ("I see, so it's not *too* snobby," Clark said.)

Earlier that day, Clark had announced for the first time that he was a Democrat, and now he seemed to be trying out some fresh campaign patter. "Seriously, how are we going to get new jobs in Cleveland?" he asked. "Young people used to want to *be* something. Now I'm afraid it's not the case. What are we going to do about that?"

"What did you want to be?" a young man with a British accent—an authentic Oxonian—asked.

"I wanted to be an astronaut," Clark said. "That was back when we had a real space program. We all wanted to invade the red planet, right out of Ray Bradbury's 'Martian Chronicles.' "

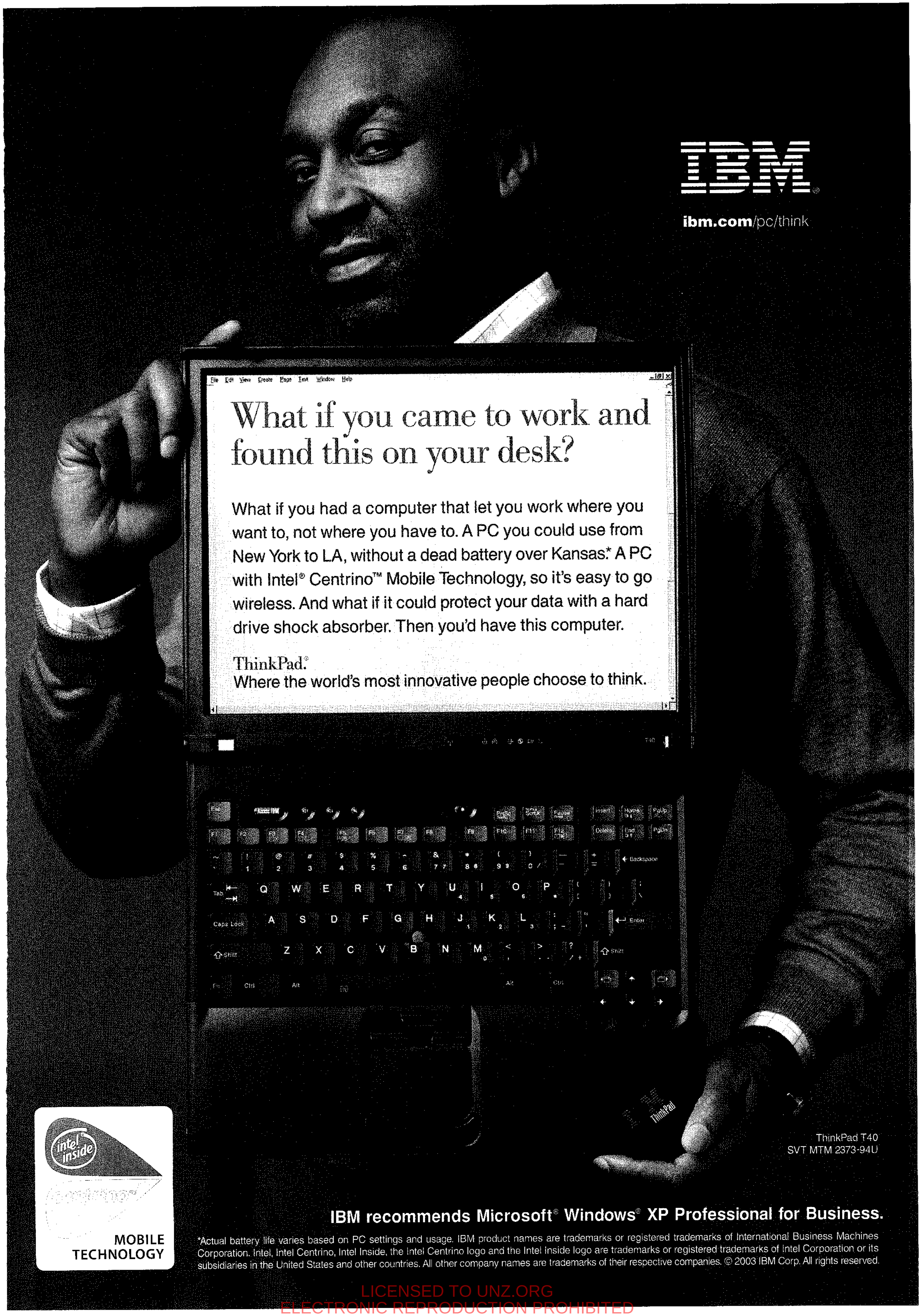
The Oxonian looked puzzled, and Clark asked, "Are you familiar with Ray Bradbury?" He was not. "Not a science-fiction fan? What about 'Lord of the Rings'? "



Wesley Clark

The young man nodded. "Tolkien was an Oxonian," he said.

The president of the Oxonian Society, Joe Pascal, is not British, but he did at least go to Oxford (Christ Church college). Pascal, who is thirty, grew up on Long Island (he now lives in Tribeca) and de-



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MAN! THAT'S THE CLOSEST I'VE BEEN TO EARTH IN 60,000 YEARS AND THAT'S ABOUT AS CLOSE AS I EVER WANT TO GET.

• •

cided to pursue his studies abroad, in an attempt to follow in Bill Clinton's footsteps. He returned to the U.S. in 1998, but claims he's been unable to completely lose the British accent he believes he picked up—so when he talks "it's like mixing oil and water."

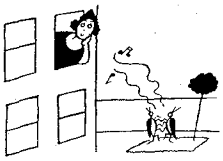
Pascal asked the General if he wouldn't mind posing for a few pictures with the group before heading into the auditorium. "I think I'd like to shake some more hands, if that's all right," Clark said, and worked his way slowly toward the door.

During his talk, Clark answered questions first from Pascal ("Did the Oxford experience provide you with something for your lifelong career in the military?") and then from the crowd ("Given the audience, could you comment on the special relationship between the U.K. and the United States?"). In the course of an hour, Clark not only channelled Milosevic (who, by the way, has "soft, puffy hands, because his mommy never let him play sports") but also staked out a few policy positions—he criticized the Patriot Act, argued for an increase in the minimum wage, and strongly recommended a U.N.-inclusive foreign policy that would "take the United States off the blame line." Still, he refused to declare his candidacy just yet. "I have tremendous respect for guys like John Kerry and Howard Dean and Dick Gephardt," he said. "They're going out there, they're shaking hands, they're looking people in the eye. That's what democracy's about."

Clark then shook some more hands and headed over to the Torch Club, on Waverly Place, for a steak dinner with Pascal and some other Oxonians. ("We made sure not to bring back old memories for Wes of eating British food," Pascal said.) Along the way, they passed a small group of Draft Clark volunteers who were handing out Clark Bars in the rain.

—*Ben McGrath*

DEPT. OF ENTOMOLOGY
A RARE AND DIFFERENT TUNE

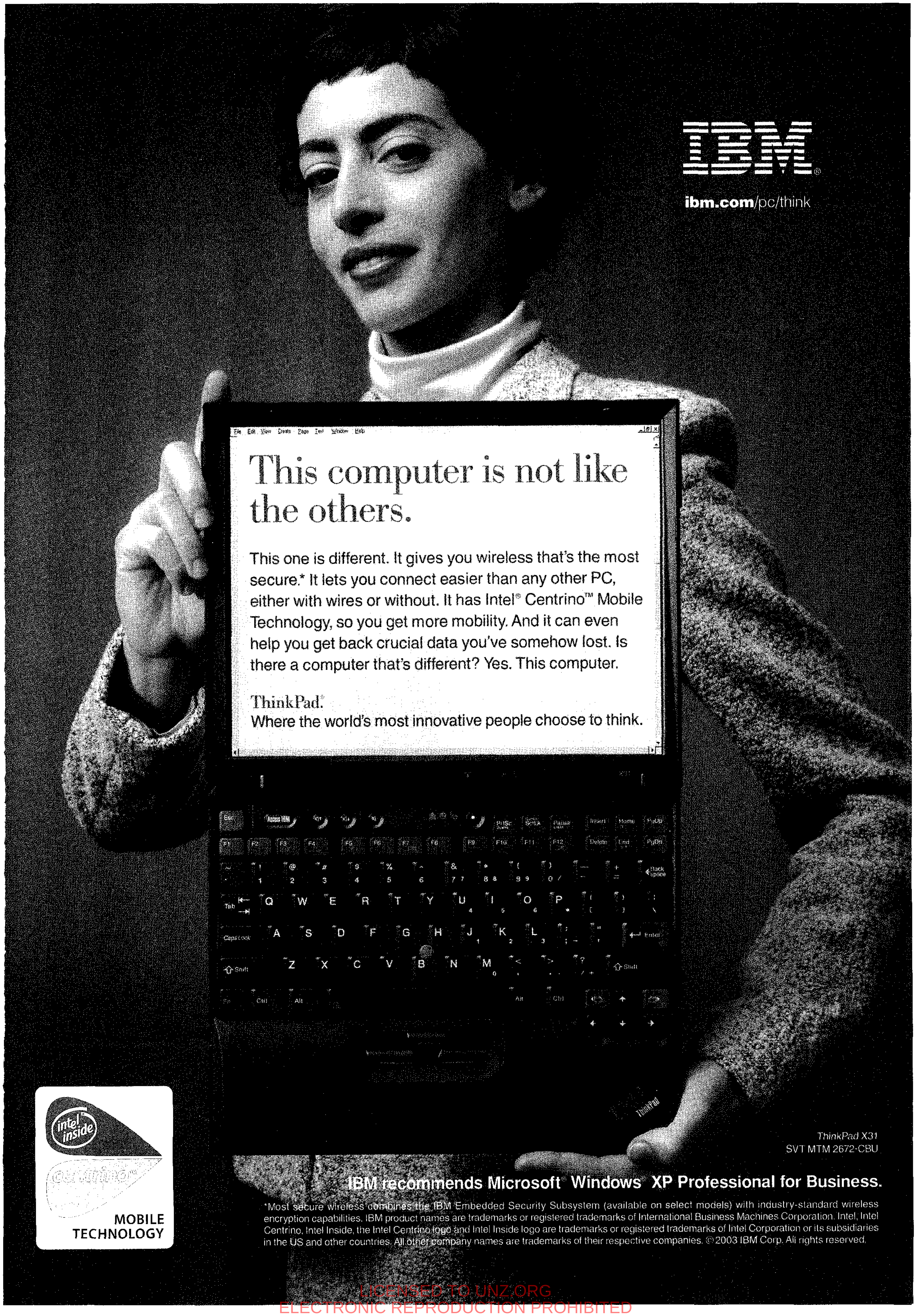


Some people go through life never knowing what a katydid is, or what kind of bug makes which sound, when, and for what reason. These people would probably think it frivolous to identify the species of tree that they might be sitting under as they decline to wonder about the origins of the bug sounds coming out of it. But the particular bug sounds chronicled below took place under a big linden, just outside the city. This was during the blackout, a few weeks ago, when anyone who was near trees might suddenly have noticed, in the absence of some of the other usual night noises—air-conditioners, floor waxers, Ernie Anastos—that the bugs, whatever they were, were making a hell of a racket.

A discussion, not quite an argument, arose over what was making which sounds. Out of the symphony, you could isolate certain strains: a *wee-wee-wee* and a *weeeeee* and a *click-click-click*, and a number of other drones and trills and, above it all, an intermittent staccato call that sounded a little like Beavis laughing—*ih-ih-ih, ih-ih-ih*. It was clear right away that the people under the linden had been making unexamined assumptions all their lives, at least when it came to late-summer nighttime bug sounds. Crickets rubbing their legs together, one person said. Cicadas, said another. Isn't it pronounced *cicaaahdas*? asked a third. No, *cicaaaydas*. Cicaaahdas. Cicaaaydas. What about tree frogs? Are there tree frogs here? Frogs? In trees? Crickets. The more you listened to the trees, the stupider you felt, like someone who'd been playing "Rubber Soul" every night for thirty years without knowing who'd made it.

Thank God the electricity came back on, because it gave everyone a chance to log on to the Internet for some insta-entomology. Some Googling turned up an array of wonderful things, chief among them FindSounds.com, which does what it sounds like it should. Type in "cricket" and you get a hundred and sixty-five brief samples of different cricket songs, some of which last less than a second—*blee, blee*. You can get your computer to play little swatches of late-summer night. After a few hours of this—with detours into other summery sounds (golf shots, home runs, ocean waves, gulls), plus drumrolls, shotgun blasts, and a wide variety of burps and moans—it was a bit clearer what was going on in the trees on these late-summer nights. Many different species of cricket were responsible for the melodious *blee, blee*. The buzzier drones were apparently cicadas. The *ih-ih-ihs*, or, if you prefer, *keh-dih-dihs*, were, of course, katydids.

The real mother lode (maps, diagrams, songs, Latin) could be found at the Singing Insects of North America Web site, a project headed by two eminent entomologists, Thomas Moore (cicadas) and Thomas Walker (crickets and katydids). Even better, you could call Walker himself in his office at the University of Florida, where he was busy last week working on a CD of bug sounds, to accompany



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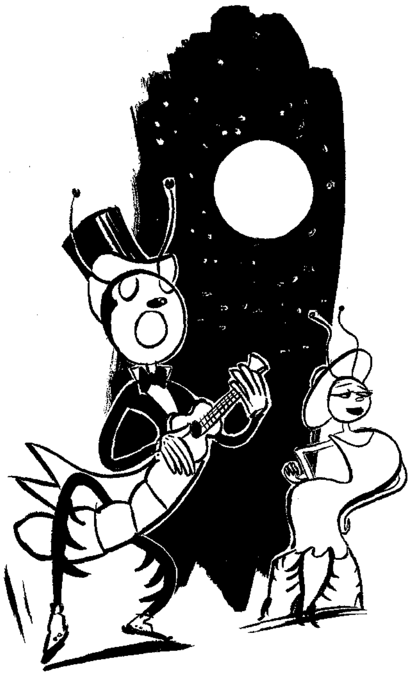
a forthcoming field guide. "First off," Walker said, in a drawl that suggested nocturnal swamp outings, "only the males make noises, at least those loud enough to be heard from a distance of a couple of metres." The idea, of course, is to attract females. Those that sing at night do so because, as Walker put it, "if you sing in a tree in the day, you are liable to get eaten by a bird." Crickets rub their wings together, not their legs. A number of species crepitate—that is, pop open their wings, like a lady with a fan, except that these aren't ladies. Cicadas rely on a vibrating membrane, their timbals, and have various amplification tricks. "Insects have a real tough time making loud noise, because they're small." Katydids rub their front wings together, and membranes within their wing veins act as speakers. If you put two common true katydids in a room, they will take turns singing. Walker said he had been on a mountainside in West Virginia where thousands of katydids performed a call-and-response number—first one thundering chorus of Beavises, then another. (This, sadly, was not on his Web site.) He estimated that up here we're probably hearing five species of each on any given evening. Unfortunately, these do not include certain species of field cricket: "There's a fly that listens for the sounds the males make and homes in on them sometimes within a minute." The flies deposit larvae on the cricket, and in ten days or so the cricket is dead, but there are clever males who hang around the noisy ones and keep quiet and often get the girls. "We call them 'sneakers,'" Walker said. "Or something beginning with the initials 'S.F.'"



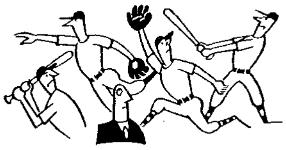
Sneaky fuckers?

"You said it, I didn't."

That night, a brief foray into Central Park—leaves skittering on the ground, autumn on the way—suggested that there may be no such thing as insta-entomology. Crickets, katydids, cicadas: there were so many sounds it was hard to tell. You got the feeling, though, that the Park was crawling with S.F.s.

—*Nick Paumgarten*

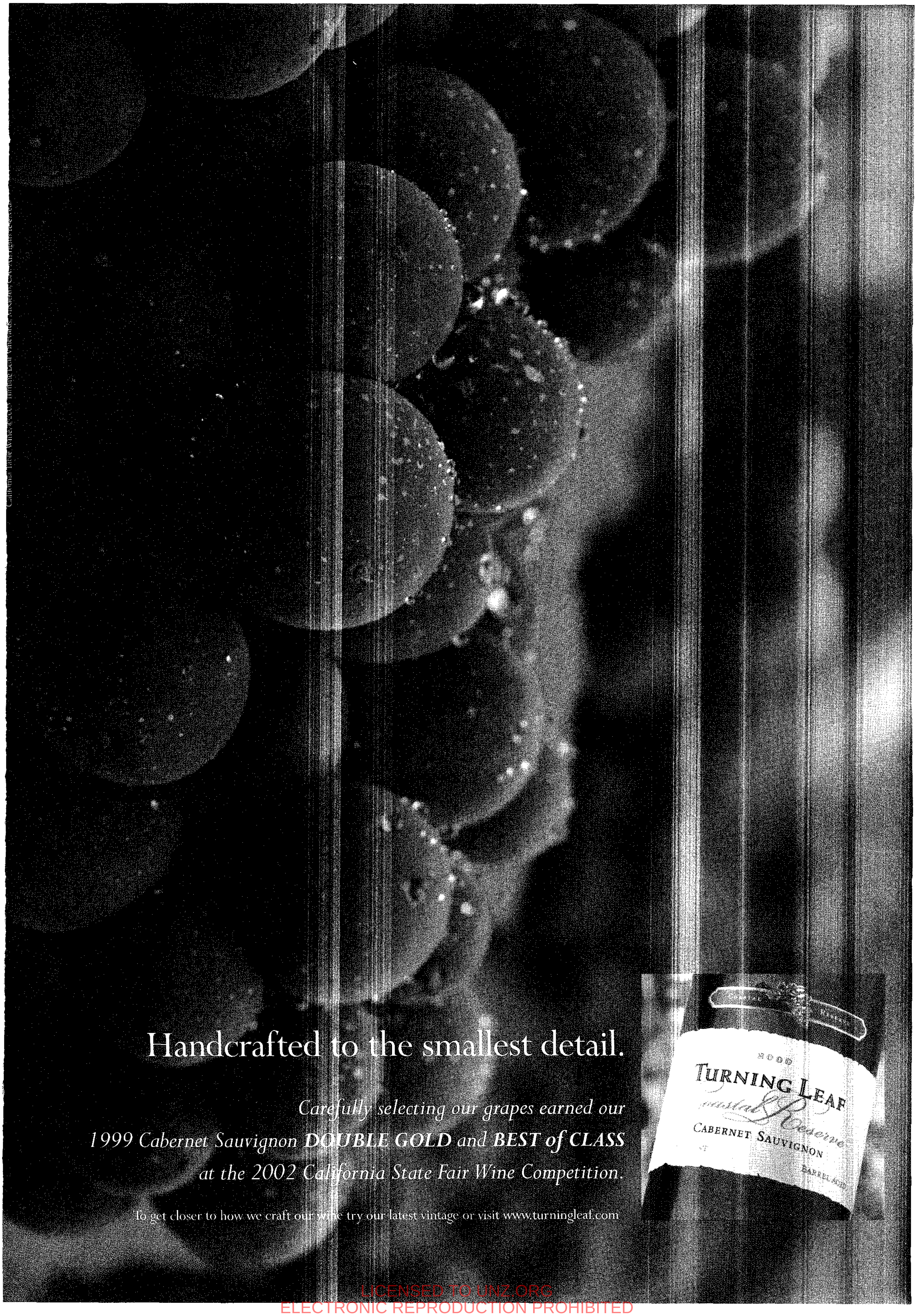
THE BOARDS
DOING YOGI



"My baseball was stickball—that's a broom handle and a rubber spaldeen—and where I lived, you go to the park, only the park's concrete," the actor Ben Gazzara said one evening earlier this summer, over a drink at his apartment, in the East Eighties. He had just driven in from Sag Harbor, where he and his wife, Elke, have a house, and where, two days earlier, he'd opened the season at Bay Street Theatre, playing Yogi Berra in a one-man tour de force called "Nobody Don't Like Yogi." He was sitting in a striped silk armchair in his dugout slouch—shoulders down, arms loose, feet planted on the rug with plenty of room between them for a bat. His hair was shaved close, into a perfect Yogi Berra crewcut ("My wife hates it," he said). And he was reminiscing about the game of baseball as it was played sixty blocks south, and as many years ago, by the sons of the Irish and Agrigento immigrants who'd taken over the tenements of the neighborhood known today as Murray Hill.

Gazzara loves baseball. It may be that the only person involved with "Yogi" who didn't know this was the man who wrote it. The play dropped into Gazzara's life last year—which is to say the postman brought it, unsolicited, with a letter inviting him to a reading. Gazzara had never heard of the writer, a Brentwood prep-school teacher named Thomas Lysaght—"Black Irish," Gazzara calls him—and didn't know if Yogi had heard of him, either. But he read the play, and liked it, and, more to the point, he says, Elke, who read it first, liked it, and "Elke is never wrong." It turned out that everybody liked "Yogi" so much that by curtain on opening night the producers were making plans to bring it to New York. (The play opens here in October.)

As it happens, Gazzara's own adventures in baseball ended as abruptly as Yogi's had managing the Yankees. (George Steinbrenner fired Yogi in 1985, only sixteen games into the season, and after a pennant the year before.) It was around 1960, some five years after Gazzara hit Broadway as Brick in "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof." He'd graduated to a bat and a real ball, and was playing center field for "a terrible team of football jocks, gamblers, writers, actors, and mainly losers" who drank at a bar at Forty-fifth and Eighth called Harold's Show Spot. "I'd bought cleats, the iron ones," he said, wincing even now. "We're losing by two runs, and I'm up at the plate, bases loaded, and I hit a sharp ball down the left-field line—it's at least a double—and I'm running in these cleats, and I don't have to slide, but I'm going to slide anyway because I want to look like Joe DiMaggio." His leg broke, his ankle shattered, and the movie that he was about to start shooting—"Convicts 4"—had to be postponed. "Joe DiMaggio was my god," he said. "The god of all Italian-Americans. First thing I'd ask when school got out: What did Joe do today? He wasn't hitting, I'd get depressed." But Yogi's the Yankee Gazzara can identify with today, as an actor. For one thing, they're both gentlemen of a certain age, though Yogi, at seventy-eight, has five years on Gazzara. For another, they've both been through the wars. Yogi reconciled with Steinbrenner—it took him fourteen years—and got his day of tribute at Yankee Stadium; Gazzara battled a bad cancer of the mouth four years ago, and has since managed to put his famous gravelly voice back together, to make two more movies, and now, despite the fact that he can't salivate anymore, to deliver an hour-and-thirty-five-minute monologue without taking so much as a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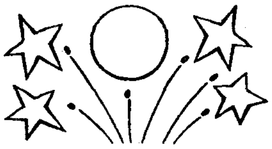
sip of water. ("It's not the same," he said. "But, interestingly enough, I think it's better for Yogi than my old voice. I'm not as much in command of it as before. I can't play tricks with it, cover for myself with it. It has to be how I feel.") Finally—this is important, Gazzara thinks—the two men share a kind of deep, melancholy shyness. "You know, I have this theory that all good actors are shy people," he said. "It's only on a stage, through a character, that they can admit the kind of things they sit on, in life, repressed. With Yogi, it was the field—that's where he lived, where his shyness dissolved and he could say, 'This is who I am, this is what I feel.' Sure, he said, 'Déjà vu all over again.' He said, 'Nobody goes there anymore—it's too crowded.' But he's not Oscar Wilde. He didn't sit home thinking about those things. But when he talked baseball nobody was smarter.

"The play is invention—there's a man his age, my age, on the day of his tribute at the Stadium, talking about what is, what was, what he did wrong. A one-man show is made to order to show off, show your wares, show the audience what a good actor you are, and I was really determined not to do that. I said to myself, 'Don't show off, less is more, especially with Yogi.' "

—*Jane Kramer*

LIGHT SHOW
ROCKETS' RED GLARE



The Chinese may well have invented everything except the forward pass, but some of their most important inventions were accidental. Did you know, for example, that the Chinese characters for "gunpowder" translate literally as "fire medicine," because the alchemists who discovered it, in the eighth century A.D., were looking for a combination of minerals that would give their emperor eternal life? This information comes from the artist Cai Guo-Qiang, whose "Light Cycle: Explosion Project for Central Park," scheduled for exactly seven-forty-five on the evening of September 15th, promises to raise the art of fireworks to a new level. The event, which caps a summer-long celebration of the Park's hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary, will take place in three stages: "Signal Towers," five towering geysers of colored fire at locations ranging from the Heckscher Ballfields, near West Sixty-fourth Street, to the Reservoir, at Ninety-fourth Street; "Light Cycle," three horizontal rings above the tree line, giving way to a gigantic vertical ring, a thousand feet in diameter, that hangs over the Reservoir; and "White Night," a canopy of brilliant, slowly descending white light that briefly illuminates the entire Park. The sequence will take less than five minutes from start to finish, but, if all goes well, our memory of it should last much longer.

Cai's pyrotechnical breakthrough, which he developed with the assistance of the Grucci fireworks family, on Long Island, is to combine huge numbers of individual firework events into unified, massive forms in the sky. To make the vertical wheel of fire over the Reservoir, which will last for fifteen seconds, Cai and the Gruccis have allocated ten thousand rocket "shells." "By comparison," Cai said last week, "for a typical Fourth of July show by Macy's, which is the largest in this country, they fire about ten thousand shells per minute. Here we have ten thousand shells in fifteen seconds." Cai, whose English is still shaky, even after eight years of living in New York, spoke in Chinese, and Jennifer Wen Ma, the director of the Cai Studio, on Great Jones Street, translated expertly. Given the complexity of the Central Park event, he was asked, was it possible that something might go wrong? "No one can say," Cai said cheerfully. "It is all done by computer. We did many tests, but if there is any electrical problem, like a surge, you cannot go back and physically light ten thousand fuses."

Sitting in his immaculate studio, at one end of a glass-topped table whose top had just been squeegeed and wiped dry on both sides by his wife, Hong Hong Wu, and a female assistant, Cai (pronounced "Si") projected an affable but ineffable reserve. He is forty-five years old, with a head shaved clean on the sides, leaving only a small skullcap of close-cut pepper-gray hair on top, and he was dressed in dark clothes and yellow socks that housed each toe separately. Born in Fujian Province, China, the son of a scholar-artist in the old Chinese "literati" tradition, Cai studied stage design in Shanghai, became a painter, and eventually moved to Japan, where he lived for eight years, and where he became known internationally for his large-scale, avant-garde art projects and installations, many of which involved gunpowder. In 1995, he was invited to do a project for P.S. 1, the alternative art space in Queens, and he has been here ever since. "When I came here, I was still travelling all around the world doing various exhibitions, so New York was more like a studio," Cai said. "I didn't have a sense of belonging to the city. But that changed after September 11th." He was in Italy at the time of the attack, working on a project, but his wife and daughter were here—his daughter's school is near the site of the World Trade Center—and afterward he felt differently about New York. "I felt tied to the city and to all the things that were happening here, and I had a strong urge to give back in some way," he said. Then, just a few months after September 11th, the Museum of Modern Art asked him to organize a fireworks event. "I wanted to make something very unusual," he said. The resulting piece, "Transient Rainbow," was a giant colored arc of fireworks over the East River that signalled the museum's move into temporary quarters in Queens. The rainbow impressed a lot of people, and led to an invitation from the Central Park Conservancy, which commissioned Cai to do "Light Cycle." The arts group Creative Time coördinated the project.

"Everybody loves fireworks," Cai observed, "but you cannot tell one year of fireworks from the next. You watch, you have a good time, you clap, and no one remembers it." He continued, "One does not think of commissioned ceremonial works as art. I wonder why that is, and whether we could not explore that, to use it as a challenge. The cultural climate is different now. For example, here in the city an explosion takes on much different significance since 9/11. Something used for destruction and terror can also be constructive, beautiful, and healing."

—*Calvin Tomkins*

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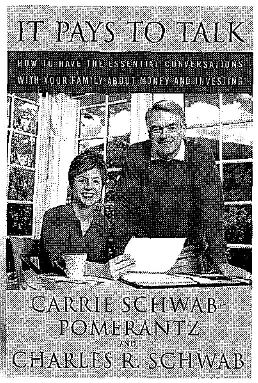
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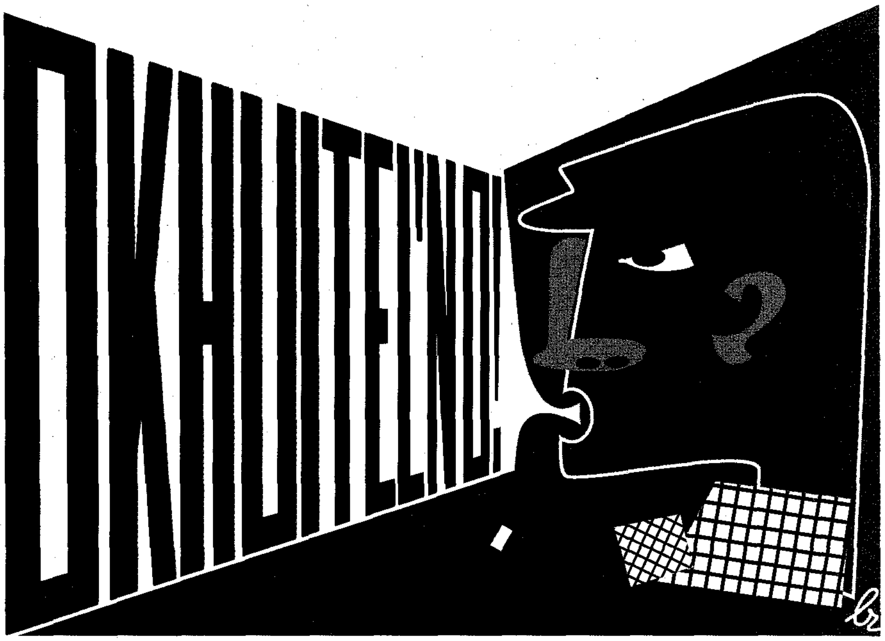
LETTER FROM MOSCOW

DIRTY WORDS

The unique power of Russia's underground language.

BY VICTOR EROFEYEV



Mat, the bawdy national argot, was for years the Gulag of Russian linguistics.

In the Russian State Duma building, at the center of Moscow, I showed my visitor's pass to a set of sullen guards, shot up to the fourteenth floor on an express elevator, and opened the door to a waiting room, where I discovered an Asian woman speaking on the phone in a language that sounded like Chinese. "Kaadyr-oöl Alekseyevich is expecting you," she chirped, covering the mouthpiece of the phone with her hand.

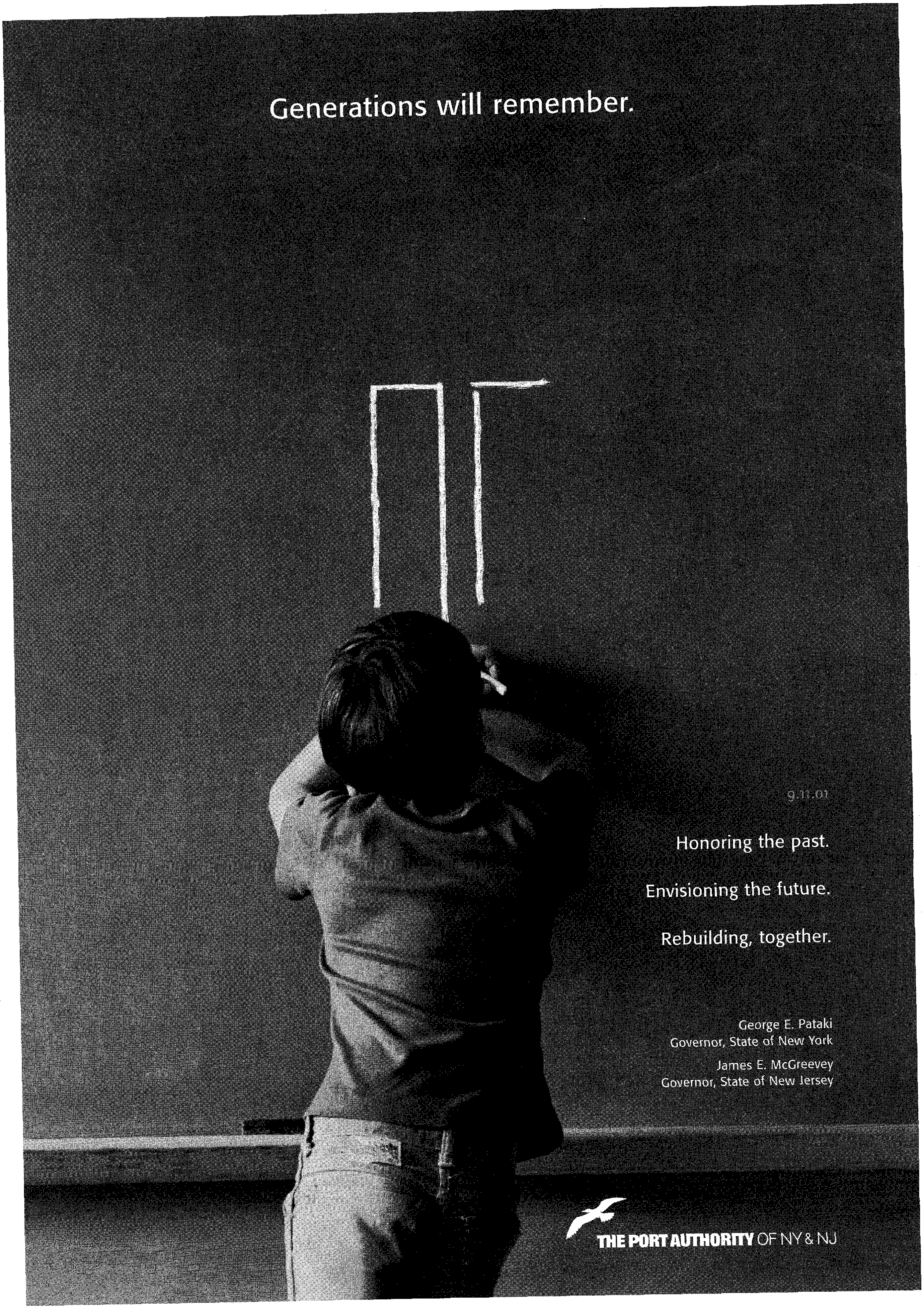
Kaadyr-oöl Alekseyevich Bicheldei, the State Duma deputy from the republic of Tuva, in the mountains of southern Siberia, had recently become famous throughout the country as the primary author of draft legislation designed to make Russian the only official state language. "In strengthening the Russian language, we strengthen the Russian state," Bicheldei told me. Although the bill was supported by his fellow-members of the pro-government Unity faction, it had sparked a furious debate for reasons other than its obvious political coloration: it also contained a declaration of war on *mat*, Russia's bawdy national argot.

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, *mat* was largely a language of the street. But in the nineteen-eighties, during Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika reforms, it began to move aboveground, infiltrating the mass media, literature, movies, and eventually the Internet, finding its way onto videocassettes, into pop songs, and even opera. Russia today is experiencing the age of the liberation of *mat*, and its lilt is often heard in public spaces, including the Duma itself. At first glance, Russia may seem simply to be echoing the experience of the West, with a delay of twenty or thirty years. Arguments for and against "unprintable" language are nothing new to Western culture, and, from a formal point of view, you could say that *mat* is no different from the lexicon of English-language idioms that employ various forms of the word "fuck" (which has, in fact, been imported and is widely used by Moscow adolescents). But, unlike the indecent terminology of most other languages, *mat* is multilevelled, multifunctional, and extensively articulated; it is, in a way, more a philosophy of life than a subset of language. And, according to Anatoly Baranov, the director of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of the Russian Language, it has been "subject to far more powerful social prohibition" than any profane vocabulary in the West.

In 1873, Dostoyevsky claimed, in the first volume of "A Writer's Diary," that a Russian could express the entire range of his feelings with a single word. He didn't actually name the word, which was not deemed printable at the time. But the word appears today in graffiti on millions of Russian fences, on the doors of public toilets, and on school walls; it is carved into tree trunks and scratched into ancient monuments everywhere that Russians have travelled. The word in question, *khuy*, a term for the male sexual organ, is one of the four cornerstones of *mat*—along with the nouns *pizda* ("cunt") and *blyad'* ("whore" or "bitch") and the verb *ebat'* ("to fuck"). The term *mat* itself derives from the Russian word for "mother," a component of the key phrase *yob tvoyu mat'* ("fuck your mother"), which until recent times was taken so literally that the bloody brawls it incited often ended in murder, especially if they started in Russian prisons. Appropriately, *mat* was, for many years, the Gulag of Russian linguistics—a vast and complicated network that all Russians knew about but no one publicly acknowledged. Excluded from dictionaries, it was an oral lexicon comprising thousands of phrases, exclamations, interjections, and idiomatic expressions, all enveloped in a nimbus of transparent synonyms and coded euphemisms.

Some Russians are convinced that their obscene vocabulary had its origins in the Asian languages that "polluted" Russian during the period of Mongol occupation, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. Most scholars, however, dismiss this as fantasy—a desire to disassociate Russian society from the crudeness of *mat*. Perhaps more interesting than *mat's* etymological derivation is its psychological origin: why is Russian profanity so firmly rooted in sex? In other languages—even in other Slavic countries, such as the Czech Republic or Poland—the vocabulary of obscenity is more or less evenly divided be-

LAURIE ROSENWALD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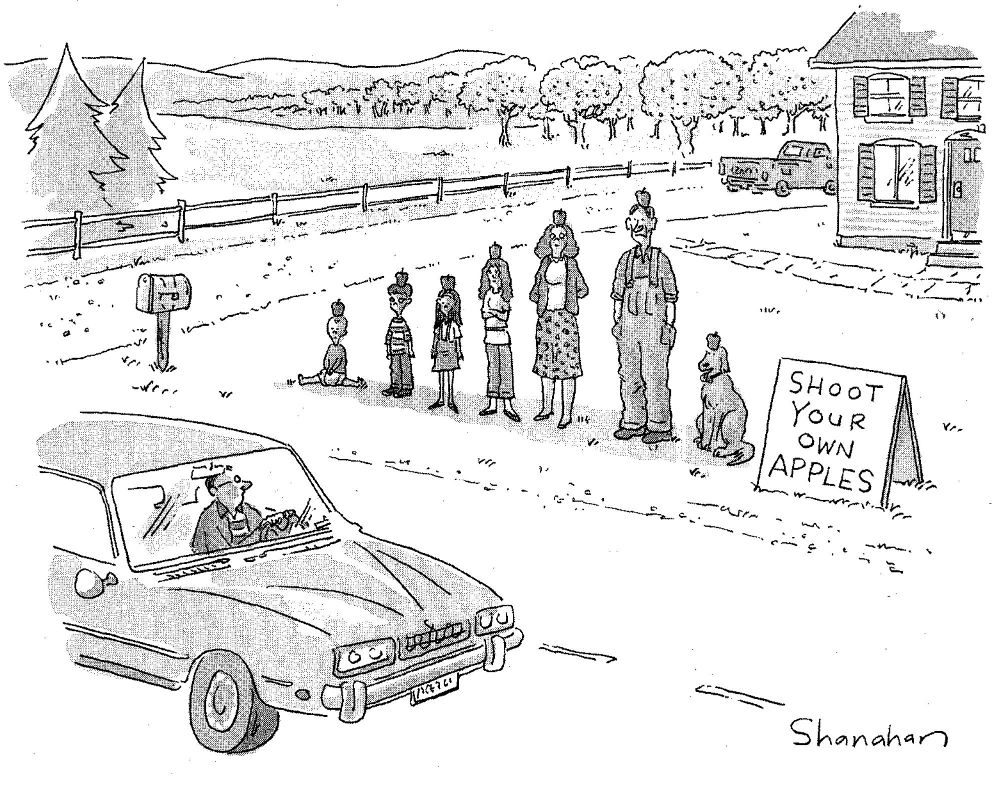
tween shit culture and sex culture. All the basic elements of *mat*, however, relate to sexual activity, which, in Russia, is considered far dirtier than defecation.

With the exception of a brief period that began in the early nineteen-hundreds—in the "silver age" of art—and ended under Stalin in the thirties, there has been such a taboo on sexual activity in Russia that there are virtually no acceptable Russian words with which to speak about one's sex life. The official words used to describe the genitalia and physical love are either euphemistic or borrowed from clinical Latin. (In English, the word "fuck" is simply a rude way of referring to the sexual act; in Russian, the act itself is indecent.) *Mat* developed over the years as a revolt against this social obliteration of the body—a parallel underground dialect, informed almost entirely by sex. A kind of cultural schizophrenia resulted: as the authorities shunned even the slightest hint of *mat* (Gogol, for instance, was obliged to omit the disdainful exclamation "*Nozdrya!*"—literally, "Nostril!"—from his novel "Dead Souls" because of its distant echo of the word *pizda*), *mat* became the matrix of the Russian unconscious, both feared and imagined everywhere. Catherine the Great even issued a special decree forbidding any use of the word *blyad'*. And in Soviet times swearing in public could earn you fifteen days in jail.

Scholars believe that the word *khuy* is connected with the Slavonic word *khvoya*—in modern Russian, "pine needle"—that is, something that pricks. *Ebat'* comes from *bit'*, meaning to beat or strike, and signifies beating with a pointed object—and in a part of the anatomy that is fundamentally unclean, since the word *pizda* is believed to come from the verb *pisat'* ("to piss"). In other words, the whole business of sex is both dirty and painful. Yet *zhopa*, the word for "ass," has never been regarded as a *mat* term, and the rear end is of so little interest that Russian has no real equivalent for the word "asshole," either in the physical sense or in the metaphorical (the Russian phrase signifying "a hole in the backside" is far too cumbersome for expressive purposes). "Shit" is not popular, either, and when American movies are dubbed the word is rendered by the Russian equivalent of "damn."

One theory has it that before Russia became Christian obscene terms were employed by various pagan groups, including a fertility cult. When Christianity arrived, the Church declared war on *mat* as a manifestation of these cults, thereby turning the language of sexuality into a form of blasphemy. To this day, *mat* has retained certain elements of shamanism. Scholars believe that the most basic Russian oath, *yob tvoyu mat'*, is a fragment of an old Slavic formula, *pyos yob tvoyu mat'* ("a dog fucked your mother"), which indicated the defilement of the mother by an unclean animal—an incarnation of the devil. (The individual addressed was thus assumed to have been sired by a dog—what Americans might call a "son of a bitch.") The dog has long since disappeared from the phrase and it has lost its literal meaning, but it retains an archaic aura of extreme transgression. Another basic phrase, *poshol ty na khuy* ("go fuck yourself," or, literally, "go [sit] on a prick"), is an adaptation of the religious curse *poshol ty k chortu* ("go to the devil"). Its use in relation to a man carries an implied shameful allusion to homosexual rape. The imprecation *poshol v pizdu* (literally, "go into the cunt") is a dismissal of a different order—a wish for someone's death.

Although it retains its sense of blasphemy, *mat*, in its original form, was also a language of peasant revelry and the liberation of the flesh. In traditional folk culture, women sang obscene ditties as a challenge to their husbands or an invitation to their suitors. Pushkin's bawdy early poem "Tsar Nikita and His Forty Daughters" describes a culture that has lost the cunt, or, rather, forty cunts: the Tsar dispatches his heralds in search of them and after arduous ordeals they are recovered. This relationship between *mat* and the working classes persists. A Soviet-era joke goes like this: Everything is in order at the factory and the Party inspection commission is pleased. The inspectors have just one comment: too much *mat* is being used on the factory floor. The management takes note, and *mat* is banned in the factory. By the next inspection, the factory is falling far short of its quotas. Why? Because the workers had used obscene terms for all the mechanical equipment, and without *mat* they are no longer able to communicate.



Though a chic version of *mat* has always existed among the upper classes—first the liberal nobility and later the intelligentsia—the unfashionable *mat* of the lower classes is far more common. Schoolteachers across Russia wage a constant struggle against abusive parents who use *mat* with their children, and Anatoly Baranov told me that when he recently took some foreign colleagues to visit Suzdal, a town northeast of Moscow that is famous for its medieval churches, he was astounded by the language of the teen-agers. "In the speech of the intelligentsia, *mat* is an idiom that stands out against the acceptable backdrop, but there everything is the other way around," he said. There is something essential in this: If an ordinary Russian hits his finger with a hammer, he doesn't say, "Ouch, that really hurts!" He yells, "Fuck your mother!" and feels far better for it. He has rid himself of a substantial load of negativity. "Teen-agers," Baranov continued, "use *mat* as the backdrop itself, because it is a reflection of their reality, a reflection of how bad they feel. It's a discharge of psychological energy. Then, as with drugs, you have to use the words more and more often to produce the desired effect."

The Polish writer Stanislaw Lem's science-fiction novel "Solaris," which has twice been made into a film—a Soviet version, by Andrei Tarkovsky, and a more recent American one, by Steven Soderbergh—describes a planet that is a giant brain, capable of generating visions and hallucinations in anyone who approaches it. When I think of *mat*, I think of the monstrous energy field of that planet. *Mat* is a protean language in which archaic strata mix with modernity. It has a unique ability to break free of its erotic context and to characterize universal human feelings and conditions, to express admiration and contempt, ecstasy and catastrophe. Its words complement and amplify one another. Depending on the intonation, *yob tvoyu mat'* can mean anything from "I don't believe it!" to "Fuck off." The phrase *polny pizdets* ("the absolute end") can mean "Everything's fucked" or "I'm fucked up" and every permutation in between. The meaning of the Russian verb "to fall" (*upast'*) can be conveyed by three *mat* forms—*yobnut'sya* (from *yob*), *pizdanut'sya* (from *pizda*), and *khuyaknut'sya* (from *khuy*)—and the Russian ear will catch the subtle distinctions between these different ways of falling.

The world of *mat* is virtually inaccessible to foreigners studying Russian. It is too situational and semantically capricious, too dependent on ludic intonational subtleties. *Mat* is linguistic theatre, verbal performance art. It exploits the Russian language's flexible range of suffixes and prefixes, and toys with phonetically similar words from the standard lexicon in order to generate anthropomorphic images. It paints a grandiose portrait of isolation with the word *pizdepropashchinsk* (combining *pizda* with the verb meaning "to disappear" or "get lost"); it chastises senseless drivel with the word *khuetenie*, and portrays global absurdity as *khuynya* (both derived from *khuy*). The term for doing nothing is the picturesque *khuem grushi okolachivat'*—"knocking pears out of a tree with one's dick." At times, the characters of *mat's* urban folklore can take on the appearance of mythical monsters, such as *Yebena mat'* and *V-rot-yebis'* (literally, "Fucked mother" and "Fuck-yourself-in-the-mouth"). Faced with these terms, translation admits defeat. One *chastushka*—a verse akin to the limerick—goes like this:

A man stands on the bridge there, look.
He seems a lot like Mother-Fuck.
Then out of nowhere drawing near
See Fuck-Yourself-in-the-Mouth appear.

Mat expresses aggression, but in a country that has suffered from a chronic lack of freedom it also plays the role of a language of dissidence, of protest against official ideology, both political and religious. The syllables *blya-blya-blya* and *yob-yob-yob* echo through the air above Russia like the bleeps of a sputnik. Decode these sounds and you have a general distress signal, the SOS of national catastrophe. However, as my housekeeper, Valya, who goes to the Orthodox church on Sundays, said when I told her I was writing on the subject, "There's *mat* and there's *mat*."

In recent years, *mat* has acquired some warmer tones—words like *nev'yebenno* (used to describe something impressive, or "unfuckable") and *okhuitel'no* ("cool," with *khuy* as its root), which express delight and admiration. *Mat* is both cynical and supportive of life: to use *mat* is to be accepted, to be victorious. Soviet soldiers

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shouted out *mat* phrases as they attacked the Nazis; Russian hockey players use them to defeat the Canadians. Even Peter the Great was a master of *mat:* while decapitating rebellious Kremlin guards, he let out an immense stream of *mat,* a legendary tapestry of seventy-four words woven together by the force of his wrath.

Baranov, the *mat* scholar, believes that it has always lent language an element of conviction, facilitating the transition from word to deed. “In the Soviet period,” he says, “the status of the high lexicon was devalued—words such as ‘fatherland,’ ‘motherland,’ ‘truth.’ In the context of Soviet ideology, these words acquired a negative resonance, not only for the general population but also for Party propagandists. In this situation, obscene words began to function as markers of authenticity.” He told me an anecdote from his own past, when he was working as a warehouseman at a shoe factory: “Our production manager was a woman, and one day she called me in and gave me an assignment. And then she looked at me and said, ‘*Yob tvoyu mat*’ ’—‘Make sure it fucking gets done!’ I’d never heard her use *mat* before. She used it to show that she was being straight with me.”

Under an early version of the bill considered by the Duma, the public deployment of *mat* would have entailed penalties up to and including a jail sentence—a provision that particularly incensed the liberal press. (Bicheldei, the author of the anti-*mat* legislation, claims that this clause was intended simply to attract attention to the bill.) After being passed overwhelmingly by the Duma, the law was rejected earlier this year by the upper house of parliament, but Bicheldei is determined to try again.

When I met Bicheldei, a charming but rather prim doctor of philological sciences, he told me about his first encounter with *mat.* “They swear in Russian *mat* in Tuva, too,” he said of his home region, where the primary language is Turkic and Mongol-influenced. “When I was eleven, Russian linesmen came to my village to repair the electricity supply. A little while later, my Russian teacher asked me in class if I’d done my homework. I told her, ‘*Ni khuya*’—‘Not a fucking thing.’ She didn’t say anything then, but after class she came up to me and took me by the arm. ‘Don’t say that anymore. Those are bad words,’ she said. And I felt ashamed.”

Clearly, Bicheldei is still ashamed. Switching to the wooden syntax of a Soviet bureaucrat, he explained that the current “degradation of the language” was due to a lapse in moral vigilance on the part of our leaders, and “the loss of a number of value-laden ideological parameters to which the state had adhered for seventy to eighty years.”

The rulers of Russia have always taken an interest in language—and in controlling it. When Lenin came to power, he continued a tsarist push to simplify Russian spelling, often to such a degree that it lost its connection with etymology. One of Stalin’s last theoretical works was an essay on linguistics from a Marxist perspective. Khrushchev went even further than Lenin and supported a proposal to require that words be written just as they sound, but it was overturned. But the most radical changes in the Russian language came after the collapse of the Soviet Union. A whole new vocabulary was needed to reflect the emerging bandit-capitalist reality; and on the vacant lot of Soviet newspeak neologisms culled from the jargon of prison life and drug culture sprouted like bamboo. Those words transformed Russian into a language of desire, irony, coercion, and pragmatism. At the same time, they began to appear in the pages of Russian novels. Solzhenitsyn had pioneered this trend in the early sixties, in his novel “One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich,” by representing, through the use of lightly camouflaged *mat,* the slang of the Gulag. Post-perestroika publications of the Russian classics were also a genuine sensation. The average reader was amazed to discover that Pushkin, Lermontov, Turgenev, and Chekhov had all used *mat,* in their poetry or in their private letters, and that *mat* existed in an entire stratum of folklore—songs, ditties, proverbs, jokes, erotic folktales—the publication of which had been prohibited under both the tsarist and the Soviet regimes. Not everyone was ready for these discoveries. When the manuscript of my novel "Russian Beauty," which included several instances of *mat*, was sent to a printing press in the provincial city of Vladimir in 1990, the workers refused to set it in type; a delegation of six came to Moscow to negotiate with me, and we argued for hours before I was able to change their minds.

Baranov adamantly rejects Bicheldei's claim that perestroika triggered "an outrageous decline in morals and language." "Absolute nonsense!" he exclaimed, as we sat in a cozy Western-style café on Gogol Boulevard. "What actually happened was that Russian political language came under serious pressure from colloquial language. This is a historical fact of democratization. The study of *mat* is not welcomed in academic circles—it is seen as an immoral way of legitimatizing it—but scholars totally forget that *mat* is an oral folk tradition."

Russia today is divided over the future of *mat*. There are the "prohibitionists"—Bicheldei's supporters, the Orthodox Church, a significant section of the older generation, schoolteachers, the traditional intelligentsia, and large numbers of provincial Russian women. These people take the view that *mat* is purely pornographic, and some of them are prepared to destroy books that contain it. The "permissionists" are far fewer in number, but they have money. They include the pro-Western, progressive elements, who are opposed to all forms of official prohibition, and the political and cultural liberals, who have the ear of a certain segment of urban youth—students and young professionals. In recent decades, thanks to the permissionists, dictionaries of *mat* have appeared, first in the West and now in Russia.

These two groups, however, are not the whole story. There is also a substantial portion of the population that simply speaks *mat* spontaneously and without conscious reflection: vagrants, criminals, hooligans, the lumpenproletariat, large numbers of peasants and soldiers (and some of their officers), young people who have no idea what to do with their lives, alcoholics, and drug addicts. For them, *mat* is not an object of analysis; it is a natural linguistic environment. They can no more sur-

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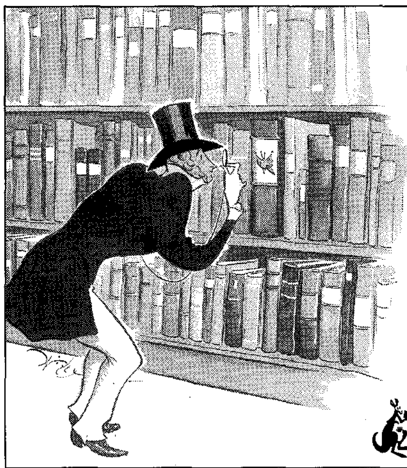

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vive without *mat* than they could without oxygen.

The prospects for the campaign against *mat* are unclear. First of all, the country has no official listing of prohibited words and expressions. Before these words can be outlawed, their existence must be formally acknowledged. But once they have been acknowledged they will cease to be even nominally underground. Boris Nemtsov, one of the leaders of the liberal Union of Right-Wing Forces, called the idea of an anti-obscene-language law "Soviet lunacy." Even the most popular of the Communists, Vasiliy Ivanovich Shandybin, who claims to speak on behalf of all those who have suffered during the conversion to capitalism, was not willing to condemn *mat* unconditionally when I spoke with him.

Bicheldei was convinced that his law would be supported by the nationalist followers of Vladimir Zhirinovsky, a deputy chairman of the State Duma, who is sometimes referred to in Moscow as a "postmodern fascist," so I decided to find out if he was right. When I got to his office, Zhirinovsky, in a pink shirt and a bright tie, was surrounded by photographers and TV cameras. He responded to my questions about *mat* with an impassioned speech: "This is our living language! Who has decided that *mat* is just bad words and deviant vocabulary? They're rejecting the language of the people. Obviously, part of the vocabulary of *mat* was created in the prisons, but then haven't we driven the entire population through the prisons? This language has become the norm!"

"So Russians should be proud of these words?" I asked.

"Russian is the most expressive language in the world! But we have a hatred of our own tongue. We reject the wealth of the language, and this has led to a rejection of Russian wealth in general. We need to rehabilitate *mat*."

Zhirinovsky himself was recently investigated by the Duma for using *mat* in a private conversation about American policy in Iraq, which found its way onto a videotape. "Imagine," he told me with an offended expression, "a hundred and eighty deputies supported a proposal to remove me from my post." But Zhirinovsky remained in place, and *mat* is alive and well in the structures of power. Even President Vladimir Putin, whose wife, Lyudmila, is a philologist, uses *mat*. For him, it is an authoritarian language. A parliamentarian I know told me that, at a meeting in the Kremlin, Putin had dismissed the arguments of the Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov by declaring, "We don't fucking need a military base in Cuba!" The obscenity—*na khuy*—was a show of power. In the presence of the President, Zyuganov would never have dared to use *mat;* therefore his was the weaker argument.

M*at*, it seems, has prevailed. The question now is whether it has grown so used to life underground that its victory will result in entropy or decay. Baranov argues that prohibiting *mat* would allow it to maintain its current level of intensity; permitting it would, by definition, deprive it of the power of its taboo. "If *mat* becomes ordinary vocabulary, it will lose its expressive and figurative functions," he said. "We'll lose a distinctive phenomenon of the Russian language and instead we'll get the kind of ordinary swear words that exist in the European languages."

Already, *mat* has ceased to be, as it traditionally was, the property of men, a staple of male drinking sessions, bathhouses, and sports clubs. An old Russian saying has it, "When a woman swears in *mat*, Christ's wounds open," but in the mid-nineties, as *mat* became more and more accepted, teen-age girls began dropping it into their daily discourse. From the filthy language of alcoholics and prostitutes, *mat* evolved into a fashionable linguistic accessory. And, in certain circles, it is even ceasing to be obscene. For the youth of Moscow and other big cities, it is often merely an instrument that enables them to discuss openly the matters of gender and sexual activity. They use it not to chastise or to punish or to shock; they use it because it's useful. A prick is a prick. A cunt is a cunt. And Russia will have to come to terms with this. *Mat* is the language of the body repossessed; it could soon be the language of passion. The new generation may yet transform a love of *mat* into a *mat* of love. ♦

(Translated, from the Russian, by Andrew Bromfield.)

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AND: A calendar of *New Yorker* events across the country

SHOUTS & MURMURS

BOX-OFFICE ANALYSIS

BY NOAH BAUMBACH

How are you feeling today?

—It was a difficult summer.

—Go on.

—Down two per cent from last year.

—Mm-hmm.

—Universal just abandoned "The Hulk."

—Are there any associations?

—My father dropping me off at kindergarten. I was screaming. He drove away.

—Anything else?

—The surprisingly soft opening weekend for "Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle."

—Yes.

—And "Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life." They're all such . . .

—What?

—Disappointments.

—I'm struck by the fact that you're more comfortable fixating on the movies that have underperformed and you haven't mentioned a bona-fide hit like "Finding Nemo" or Universal's successful platform release of the inspirational "Seabiscuit."

—Well, this goes back to what we were saying at the last session before the August break, about how I'm chronically afraid that if I enjoy something it will go away.

—Or bomb.

—Right. Like my parents' marriage.

—So that if you relish "Seabiscuit" 's recoupment maybe you'll be . . . what?

—Punished.

—What are you afraid will happen?

—That once it expands to more than fifteen hundred locations its per-screen will drop radically.

—Even despite its wonderful word of mouth?

—Yes, but word of mouth can only do so much. If Universal doesn't commit enough P. & A. . . . Sorry, I lost my thought.

—Go with it. What comes to mind?

—"Godzilla."

—Mm-hmm.

—And . . . "Swept Away."

—Do you remember how hard it was for you to admit that you wanted that movie to tank?

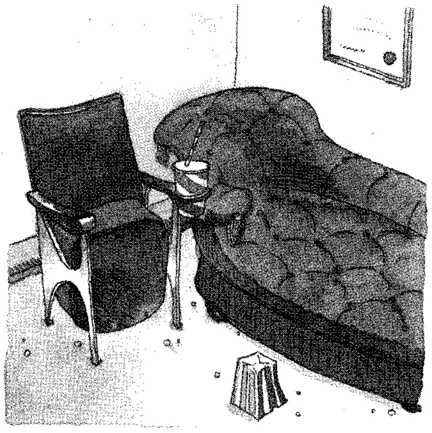
—Yes. But not "The Hulk." The Marvel franchise was unstoppable until now.

—And how does that make you feel?

—Like I can't trust anyone.

—What else?

—Sad. Sad for anyone who didn't negotiate first-dollar gross. And for the marketing people. I'm sure they all did the best they could. Although I couldn't tell what exactly the Hulk was doing on the poster.



BARRY BLITT

—Is that all?

—And sad, I guess, for me. This goes back to my fear of things not lasting. If you can do $62.1 million one weekend and the next week drop seventy per cent . . .

—Well, Ang Lee's film was too cerebral for summer audiences who wanted nothing more than conventional popcorn fare. [*Pause.*] I apologize. I believe those remarks may be countertransference.

—Universal must feel let down.

—Is Universal the only one who feels let down?

—Well, Paramount is depressed about the nonperformance of "Rug Rats Go Wild."

—I think it's interesting that you're leaving out Vivendi, Universal's parent company.

[*Silence.*]

—Where did you go just then?

—I was thinking about Jerry Bruckheimer.

—Yes, I found it notable that you hadn't mentioned "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl" and how it struck box-office gold.

—It must have made Buena Vista very proud.

—Maybe you wish Disney was your parent company, too. Any associations?

—"Daddy Day Care." Eddie Murphy is under such pressure to do boffo biz when he's in a family comedy. He broke a hundred million—what else does Sony want?

—Family movies don't travel as well overseas.

—I know; when I was four, my father uprooted me and my mom and my sister and moved us all to Taiwan.

—What are you feeling right now?

—Afraid. Afraid of how *I'm* being released.

—Will you be "Finding Nemo" or "Gigli"?

—Would it matter if I *was* "Finding Nemo"?

—Are you saying that even if you have a record-breaking opening weekend you'll still be considered a failure?

—I could make a hundred and fifty million in North America alone, ship ten million units to Blockbuster, and still my parent company would treat me like I went straight to video!

—How does it feel to say that?

—Better.

[*Silence.*]

—I'm wondering what you thought of "The Hulk." As a movie.

—I didn't see it.

—And I wonder why that is.

—Like I said, I couldn't understand the poster. Maybe it would've done better if I'd seen it.

[*Silence.*]

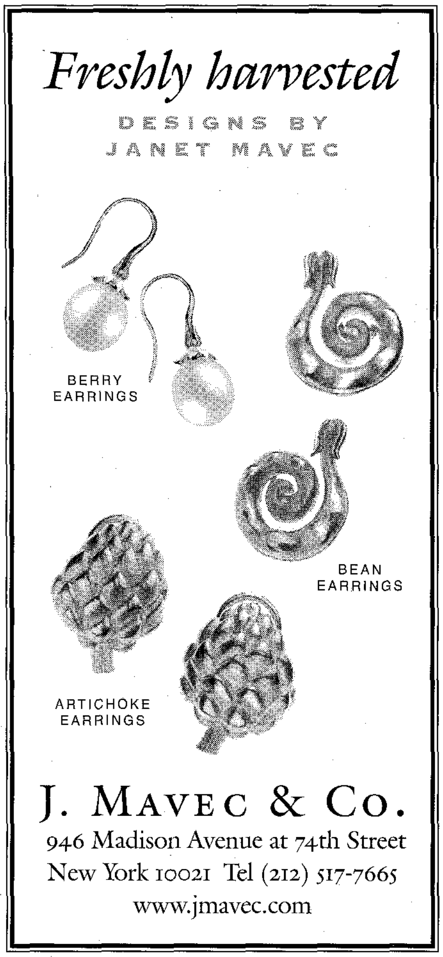
—There are tissues on your right.

—I should've seen it.

—It's not your fault.

—I could've *saved* it.

—It's not your fault. ♦



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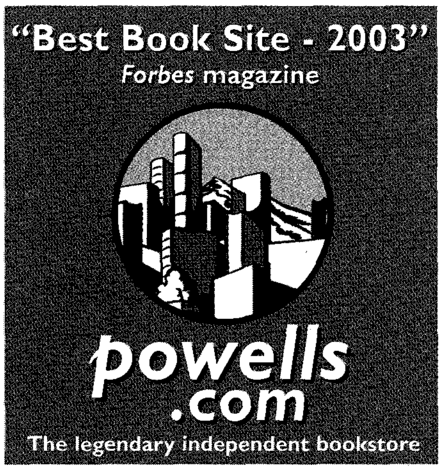

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ANNALS OF EPIDEMIOLOGY

JAKE LEG

How the blues diagnosed a medical mystery.

BY DAN BAUM

Dr. John Morgan, a professor at the City University of New York Medical School, likes to call himself a pharmaco-ethnomusicologist. His first love is early-American vernacular music, and his apartment, on the Upper West Side, is stacked with ancient records. Some years back, Morgan was listening to the Allen Brothers' "Jake Walk Blues," released in 1930. In a kazoo-backed Tennessee twang, the brothers sang, "I can't eat, I can't talk, drinking mean jake, Lord, I can't walk."

The lyrics pinballed through Morgan's memory and lit up twice. First was a lecture he'd heard in medical school, in 1961: a professor had mentioned a strange paralysis called "jake walk" that he had observed during his residency in Cincinnati in the thirties. Next was a face from Morgan's childhood in Ohio, that of a legless beggar called Nigger John. Nigger John had had the "jake leg," Morgan recalled his mother telling him. She had said it in a way that discouraged further inquiry.

Stout and bearded, Morgan, who is sixty-three, delicately set the arm of a turntable on a thick, spinning record, and after a moment's hiss we heard what sounded like pure despair. "Ishmon Bracey, one of the Mississippi greats," Morgan whispered. From seven decades back, Bracey wailed, "Jake leg, jake leg, what in the world you trying to do? Seems like everybody in the city's messed up on account of drinking you."

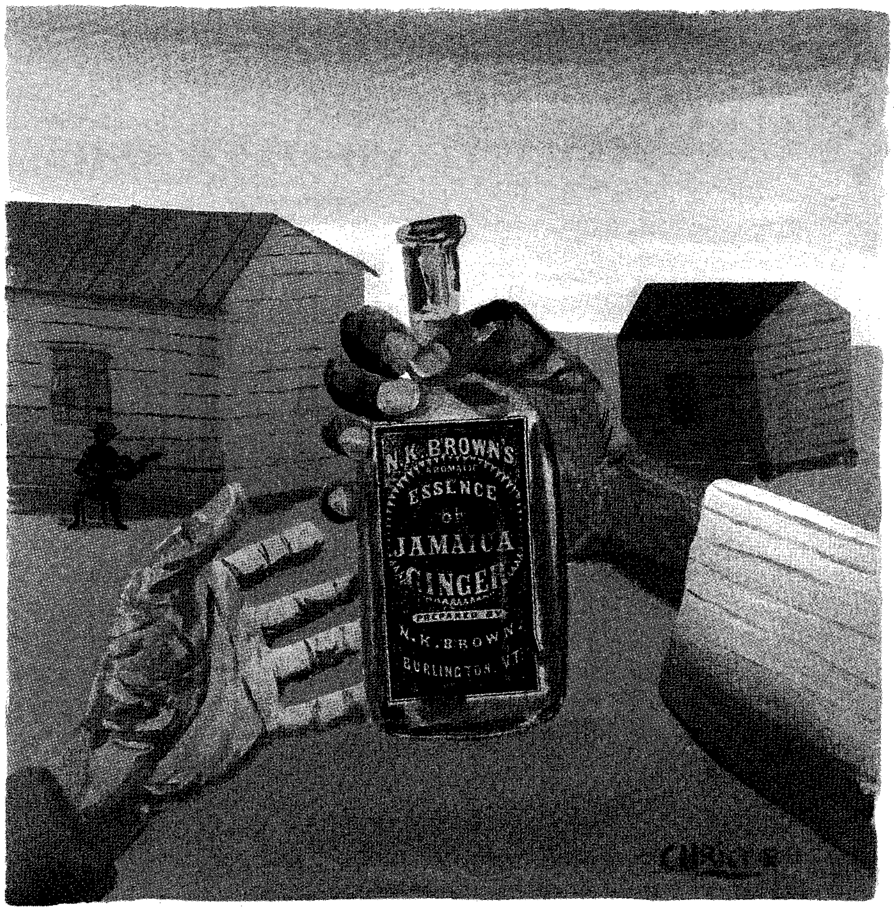
Morgan has collected a number of songs about the jake leg or the jake walk. "From them we learn that some new kind of paralysis appeared in 1930," he said. "No songs mention it before then." He began bending back blunt fingers. "The paralysis was brought on by drinking something called 'jake.' It afflicted enough souls to instigate an entire subset of folk music. Blacks and whites were affected. It rendered men impotent. And it was no longer inspiring musicians by 1934, which meant it was a cataclysmic but discrete event." He sat back and spread his hands. "Behold the study, through folk music, of a substance-induced epidemic," he said. "Pharmaco-ethnomusicology."

Morgan has been researching the jake leg on and off for twenty-seven years. He has put together a CD collection of seventeen tunes mentioning it, including one by Gene Autry, and he has written half a dozen medical-journal articles on the subject. In the nineteen-seventies, he interviewed a number of the epidemic's surviving victims and collected his data, a teeming bazaar of anecdote and chemistry, in a huge manuscript that has been gathering dust for years. He also has a filthy carton full of clippings. With a little prodding, he agreed to turn all the material over to me. "I'm not giving up on the story myself," he said. "I just don't mind someone else telling it, too."

As far as we know, the outbreak was first detected in Oklahoma City, by Ephraim Goldfain, a thirty-four-year-old physician who had emigrated from Romania as a child and had put himself through medical school by operating a streetcar. He was bookishly handsome, with swept-back red hair, a cleft chin, and round horn-rimmed glasses. With a few partners, he ran a thirty-five-bed clinic called the Reconstruction Hospital. On February 27, 1930, a man whose name is lost to history staggered in off the street. The patient's feet dangled like a marionette's, so that walking involved swinging them forward and slapping them onto the floor. He told Goldfain that he had strained himself lifting an automobile, and a couple of days later his calves had begun to tingle. Then his legs went useless below the knee. He wasn't in any pain, he said, but he could barely get around.

Sudden paralysis in those days usually meant polio, but to Goldfain, who recounted the patient's history in a medical journal, this didn't look like polio. He didn't pay much attention to the story about lifting the car. Goldfain thought the man's symptoms suggested lead poisoning. He ordered blood and spinal-fluid tests. They came back negative.

Later that day, another man appeared, exhibiting the same bizarre palsy. And then another. By the end of the day, Goldfain's clinic had admitted five patients with the distinctive paralysis. One of them, a podiatrist, claimed he had caught the illness from his own patients, and handed Goldfain a list of the ones who had gone foot-floppy in the past few days. The list had sixty-five names.



Paralysis victims initially felt "foot-floppy," and walked with a rubber-legged gait.

R. GREGORY CHRISTIE

Oklahoma in 1930 was a hard-luck place. Thanks to price-killing oversupplies of wheat and cotton, its people had gotten a head start on the Depression. The same day that Goldfain saw his five patients, the American Hospital Association criticized Oklahoma City's medical preparedness, noting that it had fewer hospital beds per capita than any other city of its size. Now it was struggling with what looked like a full-blown epidemic.

In one frenetic day, Goldfain visited thirty men on the podiatrist's list, and in the succeeding weeks followed up with other visits. The men's feet dangled, their legs hung dead below the knee. Some could get around on crutches, some couldn't make their legs move at all, some could use neither their legs nor their hands. Goldfain knew at once that this was no contagion. No children were sick, and hardly any women. The men Goldfain saw all lived in a seedy part of town known for bootlegging. They struck him as being ashamed of their illness. He had only to look at them, and the grimy scratch houses they lived in, to know they were stewbums, boozegobs, hooch histers, drunks.

Within a few days, in various locales in the East, the South, and the Midwest, men began folding up. Some found that they couldn't climb out of bed in the morning. Those who could still walk all had the same rubber-legged gait; one doctor in a Rhode Island hospital flooded with victims said that the men walked as if they were passing through "a field of wet grass." In Providence, a seventy-year-old hobo was stricken at 11 A.M. at the corner of Friendship and Plain Streets; he sat down and couldn't get up. The numbers were frightening: fifty-five cases in Worcester, Massachusetts. Five hundred practically overnight in Wichita. Six hundred and ninety in Topeka. A thousand in Mississippi. The mystery plague smote Johnson City, Tennessee, particularly hard. "A great many of the victims for the first three or four weeks were ashamed to come on the streets, but they finally came out," a Johnson City victim wrote in a letter to the Surgeon General's office. "You can go on the streets of Johnson City now, and in the run of a day, you can count three or four hundred people in the same condition that I am in."

In New England, as in the South, the typical victim was an alcoholic man living alone in a cheap rented room, unemployed or holding a menial job. Many were veterans of the Great War. A pair of Cincinnati doctors examined a hundred and seventeen victims and found their median age to be forty-seven; almost all of them were earning less than forty dollars a week. "A fair proportion led lonesome lives," the doctors wrote. "Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine anyone having less contact with the people about them than some of these patients."

The economics of Prohibition, then in its eleventh year, painted a bull's-eye on the urban and small-town poor. City swells could buy bonded liquor from Canada; backwoods hillbillies often had access to stills. Low-income townsfolk drank what they could get—rubbing alcohol, hair oil, Sterno, doctored antifreeze. What many of them preferred, though, was jake.

Jake was Jamaica ginger extract, one of the hundreds of dubious but harmless patent medicines that Americans had been relying on for a century. A pale-orange concoction packaged in a two-ounce glass bottle, it was supposed to treat catarrh, flatulence, and "late menstruation." Because it was as much as eighty-five-percent alcohol, it packed the kick of four jiggers of Scotch. And it was legal. Patent medicines had been providing an end run around temperance laws since Maine became the first state to go dry, in 1851. A bottle costing thirty-five cents was available in many pharmacies, groceries, and even dime stores. Preachers and schoolmarms could slip the flat, clear-glass bottle into a pocket for a discreet nip at home. Common rummies, though, often took a bottle into the store's back room, which many jake sellers kept as low-rent speakeasies. There they could mix the jake with Coca-Cola and have their own furtive little party.

The Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 had purified neither. It required only honest labelling. If a patent medicine contained alcohol, morphine, opium, cocaine, heroin, alpha or beta eucaine, chloroform, cannabis indica, chloral hydrate, or acetanilide, the label had to say so. Furthermore, if the medicine was listed in a compendium of drug standards such as the United States Pharmacopeia (U.S.P.), the medicine had to meet those standards and the bottle could carry the U.S.P. label. Jake, as a "fluid extract," fell under the U.S.P. requirement of four-per-cent solids (in this case, ginger) in a solution of alcohol and water. In 1919, the Volstead Act turned every state dry, but it banned only beverage liquor; jake and other alcoholic medicines remained legal. When the mysterious outbreak of paralysis occurred, eleven years later, there was no reason initially to suspect that jake had any role.

The first person to record a connection between jake and the paralysis may have been Ishmon Bracey, the black blues singer who cut "Jake Liquor Blues" in Grafton, Wisconsin, in March of 1930, only weeks after Goldfain saw his first case. Bracey was one of half a dozen Mississippi bluesmen—Son House, Willie Brown, and Charley Patton among them—whom Paramount Records had invited to Grafton that spring to make "race" records. (This was only ten years after the first black blues hit was recorded—Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues," on Okeh Records—and Paramount had heard from furniture-store owners, who sold record-players, that they could move more stock if there were more black blues records available.) In addition to Bracey, Tommy Johnson, who had made a name for himself in 1928 by recording "Canned Heat Blues," about drinking Sterno, cut his "Alcohol and Jake Blues" at Grafton. He was, according to his biographer, David Evans, a hopeless alcoholic who in a drunken stupor became convinced that he had signed away his rights ever to record music again. Johnson's brother recalled for Evans, "See, when Tom get broke, he would sell anything to get a drink of whisky or a drink of alcorub or anything that'd bring on drunk. He'd take this old black Three-in-One shoe polish and strain it through a powder muff. It would be just as clear as water." Though he lived and performed for another twenty-six years, after the Grafton session Johnson never recorded another song. Daddy Stovepipe, a singer who liked to perform in formal attire, and his wife, Mississippi Sarah, also apparently recorded a jake-leg song, though John Morgan has never found it.

Morgan believes that no other incident has inspired as much popular music as the jake-walk epidemic. Generally, one song comes out of a disaster, maybe two. "There is nothing to equal the jake walk," he told me. As a pharmaco-ethnomusicologist, Morgan pays particular attention to the portrayal of intoxicants. "Alcohol songs, like heroin songs, tend to be negative and warning, and the jake songs fit that pattern. Marijuana songs are almost always funny."

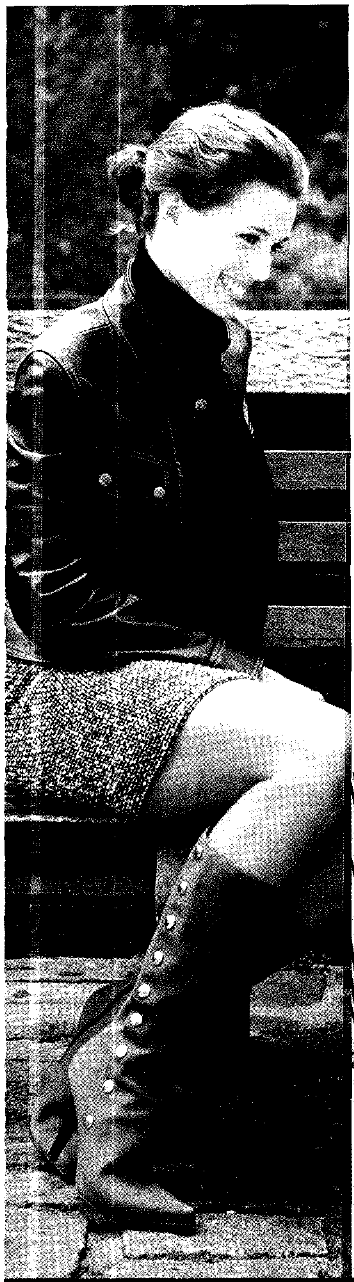
Newspaper writers came up with nicknames for the ailment: jake leg, jake walk, jakeitus, jakeralysis, gingerfoot. "The worst has happened," a one-paragraph story in the Topeka *Daily Capitol* said. "Emporia, the Athens of Kansas, has 'jake leg.' " In the country as a whole, as many as a hundred thousand people were affected, many ending up in the poorhouses, county farms, veterans' homes, and pogeys that constituted the social safety net in those days.

Right behind the stories of outbreaks came reports of miracle cures: "galvanic current," sodium thiosulfate (a cure for "heavy-metal" poisoning), and baths in cider vinegar. An Oklahoma City man said he recovered from the jake leg by being "bumped around on a long trip by automobile." An Alabama jake-legger told his doctor that corn whiskey was the "specific treatment" for his condition. A Texas woman told a judge that her doctor had recommended beer. Dr. Robert Kidd, of Columbus, Ohio, treated a hundred and twenty-five jake-leg cases by removing forty cc.'s of spinal fluid from each patient and replacing it with a product called Lille's horse serum. Aside from "terrific anaphylactic reaction," rise in temperature, severe headache, backache, nausea, and vomiting that required Adrenalin and morphine to combat, everything went swimmingly. O. B. Van Fossen, a chemist at the Golden Rule oil refinery, in Wichita, looked out his window one day to see a dozen jake-leg victims bathing in the slush ponds of warm petroleum refuse and mud. The lime and sulfur of the slurry, they'd been told, might do them good.

Some victims, for whatever reason, did recover varying degrees of mobility; for others, the paralysis was permanent. John Morgan tracked down some severe jake-leg victims in 1977. By then, the muscle floppiness they'd experienced in the nineteen-thirties had evolved into a spastic rigidity, but they were still crippled. Autopsies of jake-leggers who died from other causes showed damage to the central nervous system, including the spinal cord's anterior horn cells—the same that go bad in cases of polio and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (A.L.S., or Lou Gehrig's disease). But the spinal column's pyramidal tract cells also suffered from the jake, which gradually led to spasms and rigidity. Higher brain functions weren't affected, a team of University of Oklahoma researchers concluded, although their methodology raises questions. They dosed a chicken with enough jake to make its legs go limp and noted, "The expression in the eyes seemed to indicate that the mind was not impaired."

Once jake was established as the vector, there was no escaping the awkward truth that the victims had brought the affliction upon themselves. "God is hanging out a red flag as a danger sign to those who violate His law," thundered a Johnson City Baptist minister. Shame was an additional burden on the sufferers; the jake leg's distinctive limp betrayed everybody. Fear of disgrace made it hard for doctors to get a patient history. A paralyzed operator of a Georgia mill, for example, vigorously denied drinking jake until his doctor tricked him by offering a prescription that he said might help but could kill any patient who'd been drinking ginger extract. The patient declined the prescription.

Not all victims were poor or alcoholic. In the nineteen-seventies, Morgan interviewed "James Thomas," a highly respected white retiree who had served on the boards of several Tennessee banks. When he was seventeen, Thomas and his brother and some friends had bought some jake in Johnson City at a roadside store run by a man named Will Kite and



SOLARA Style

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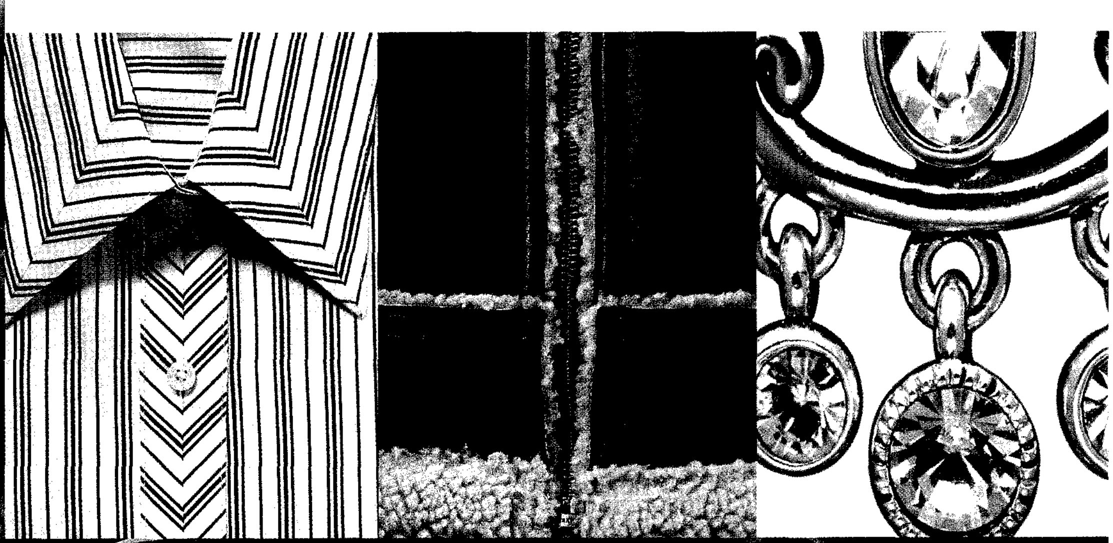
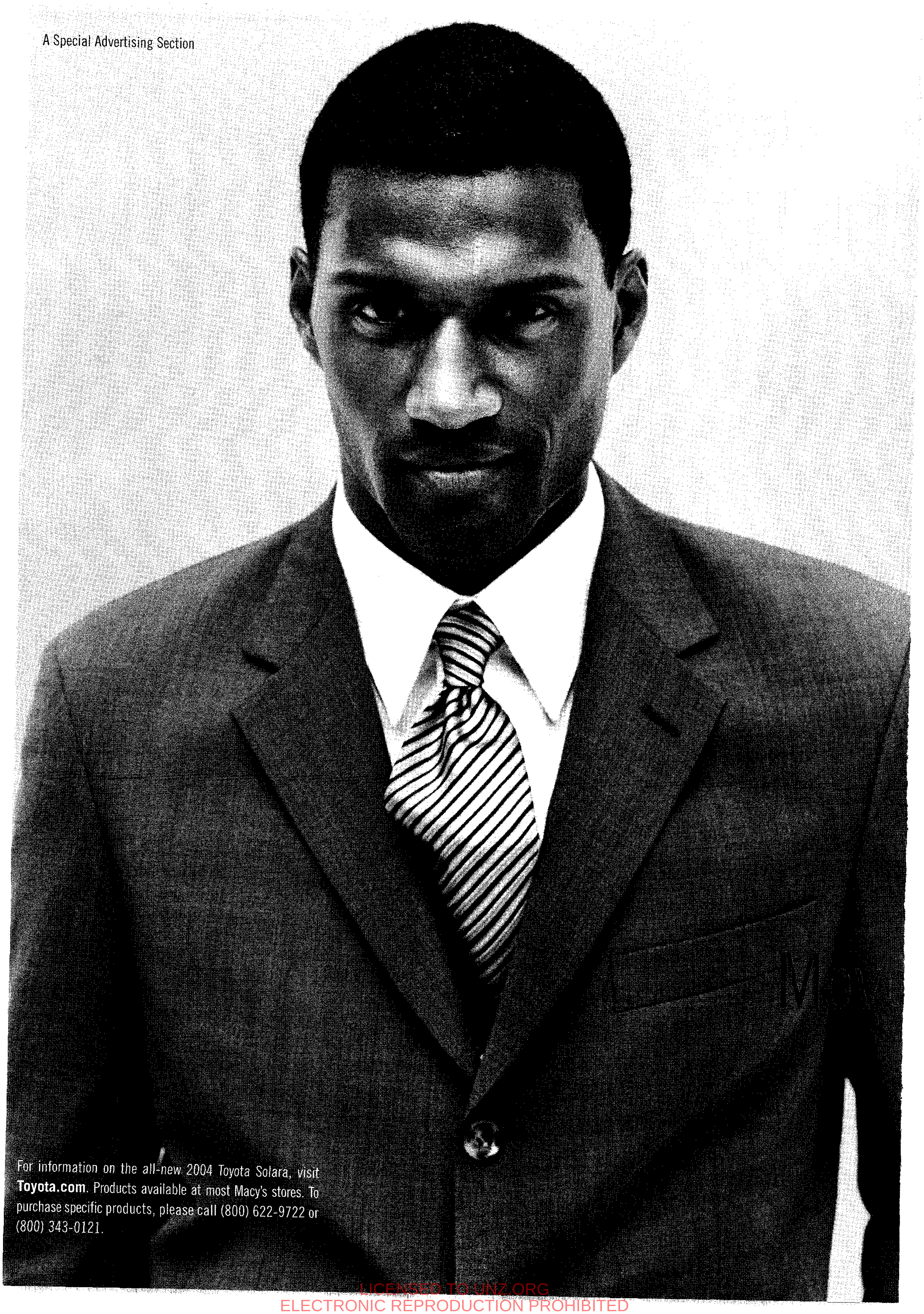
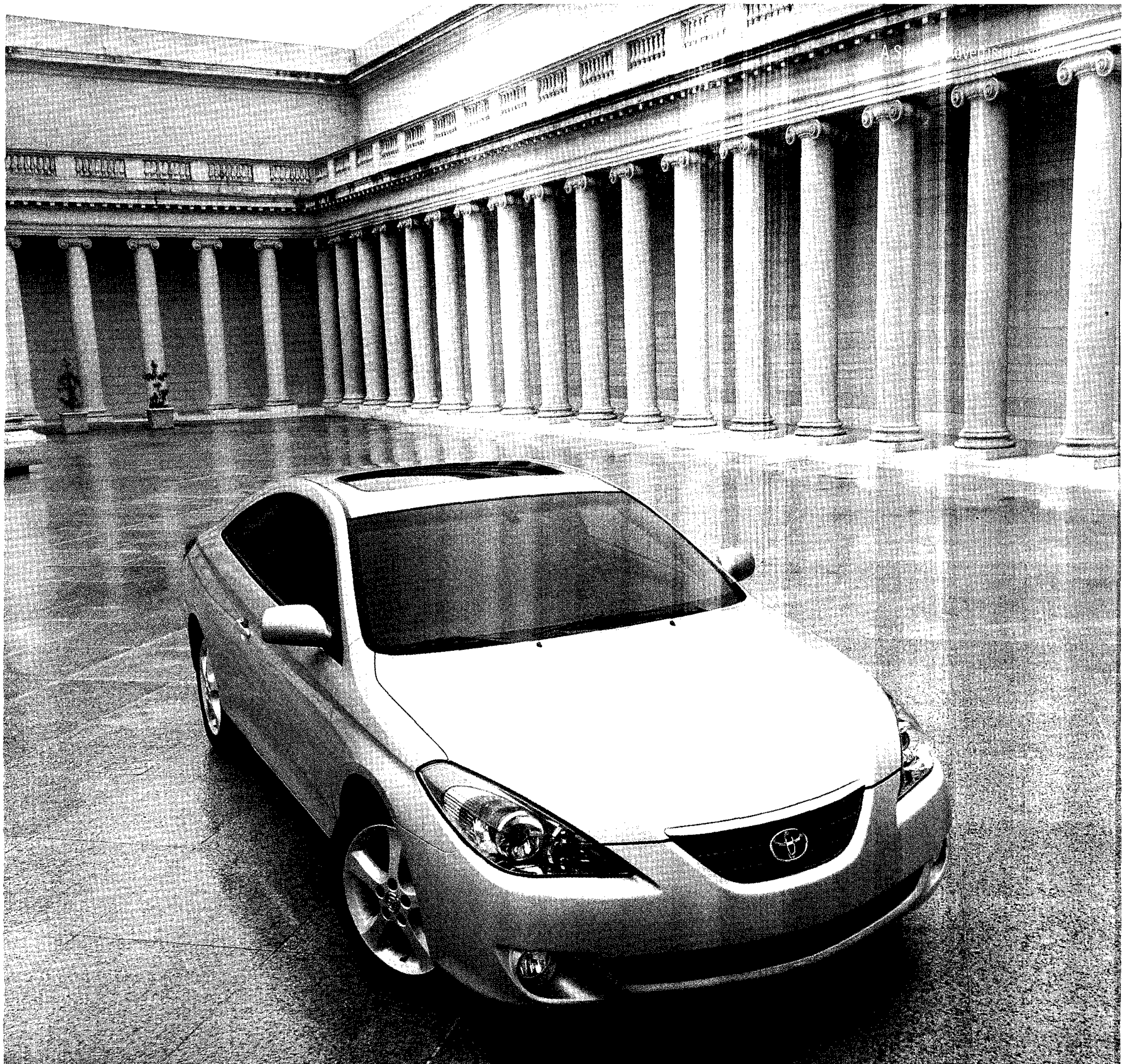




For information on the all-new 2004 Toyota Solara, visit **Toyota.com**. Products available at most Macy's stores. To purchase specific products, please call (800) 622-9722 or (800) 343-0121.



This page, clockwise from top: Toyota Solara SLE V6 shown in Lunar Mist Metallic; Victorinox® by Swiss Army Brands wheeled garment bag; TAG Heuer men's LINK black diamond dial watch. Opposite page: BOSS Hugo Boss tick weave suit, white dress shirt; Kenneth Cole New York neckwear.

into the Fast Lane

TAG Heuer
LINK
200 METERS

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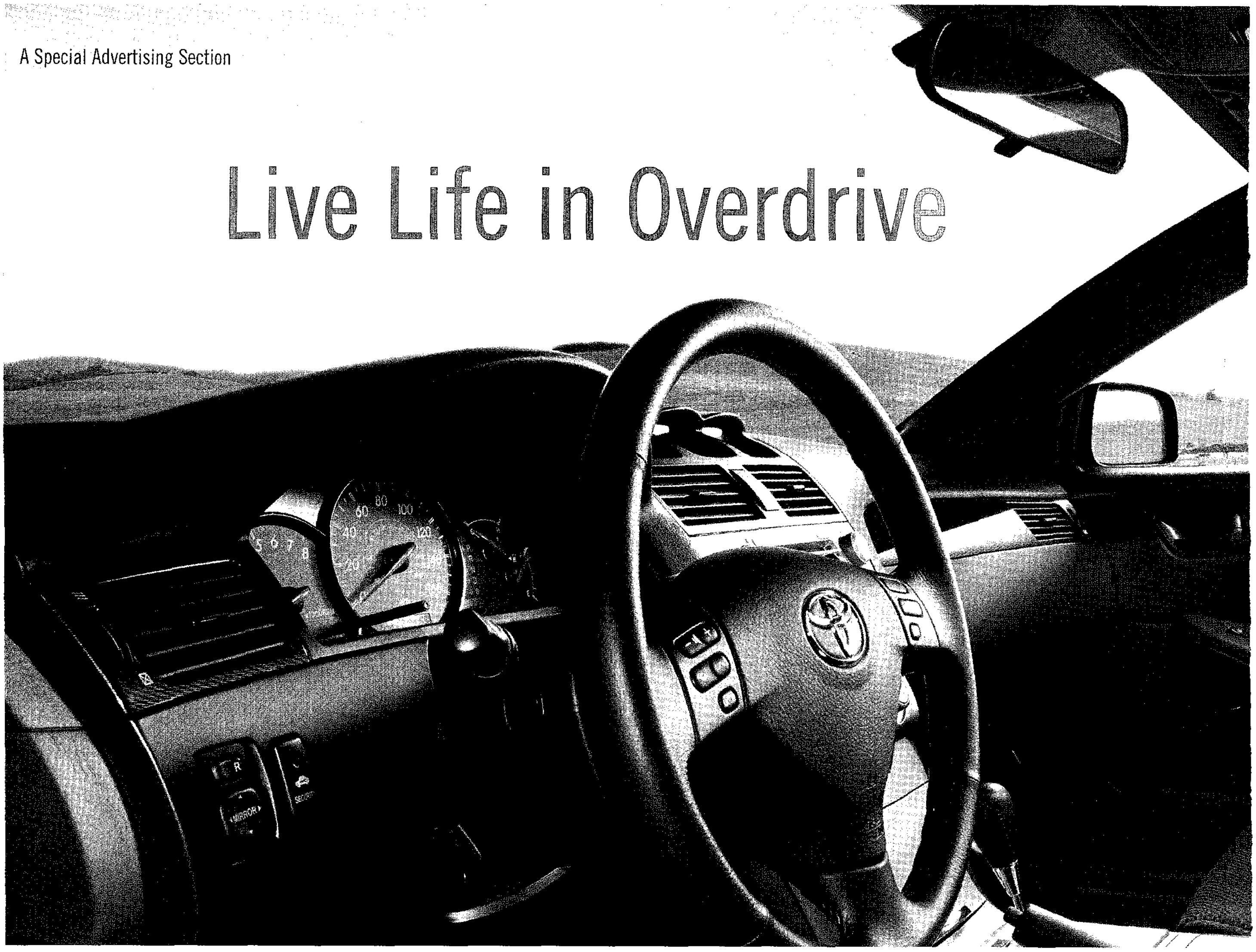

KRUPS
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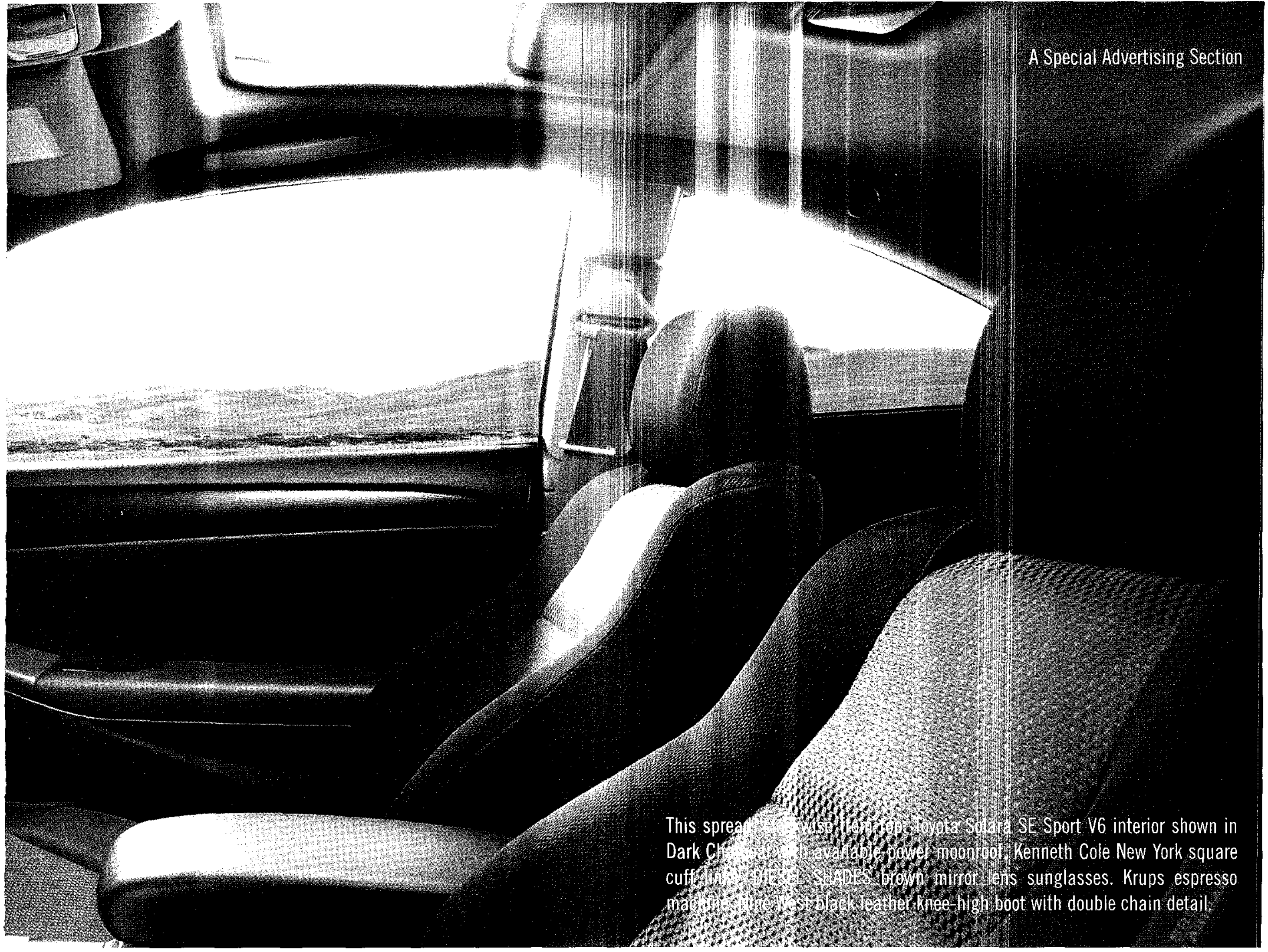

This spread, clockwise from top: Toyota Solara SE Sport V6 interior shown in Dark Charcoal with available power moonroof. Kenneth Cole New York square cuff links. DIESEL SHADES brown mirror lens sunglasses. Krups espresso machine. Nine West black leather knee-high boot with double chain detail.

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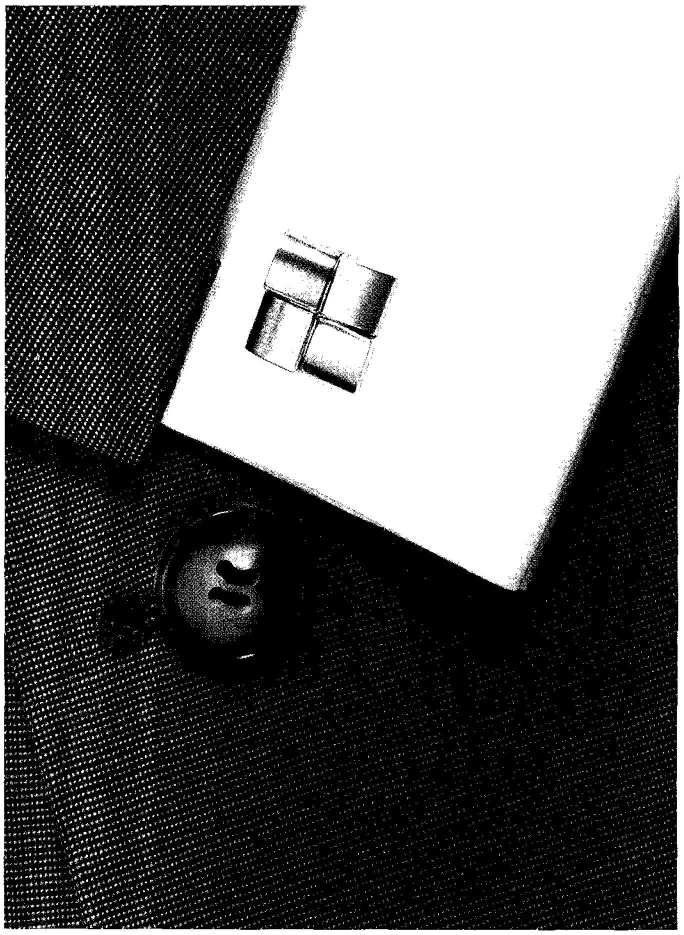

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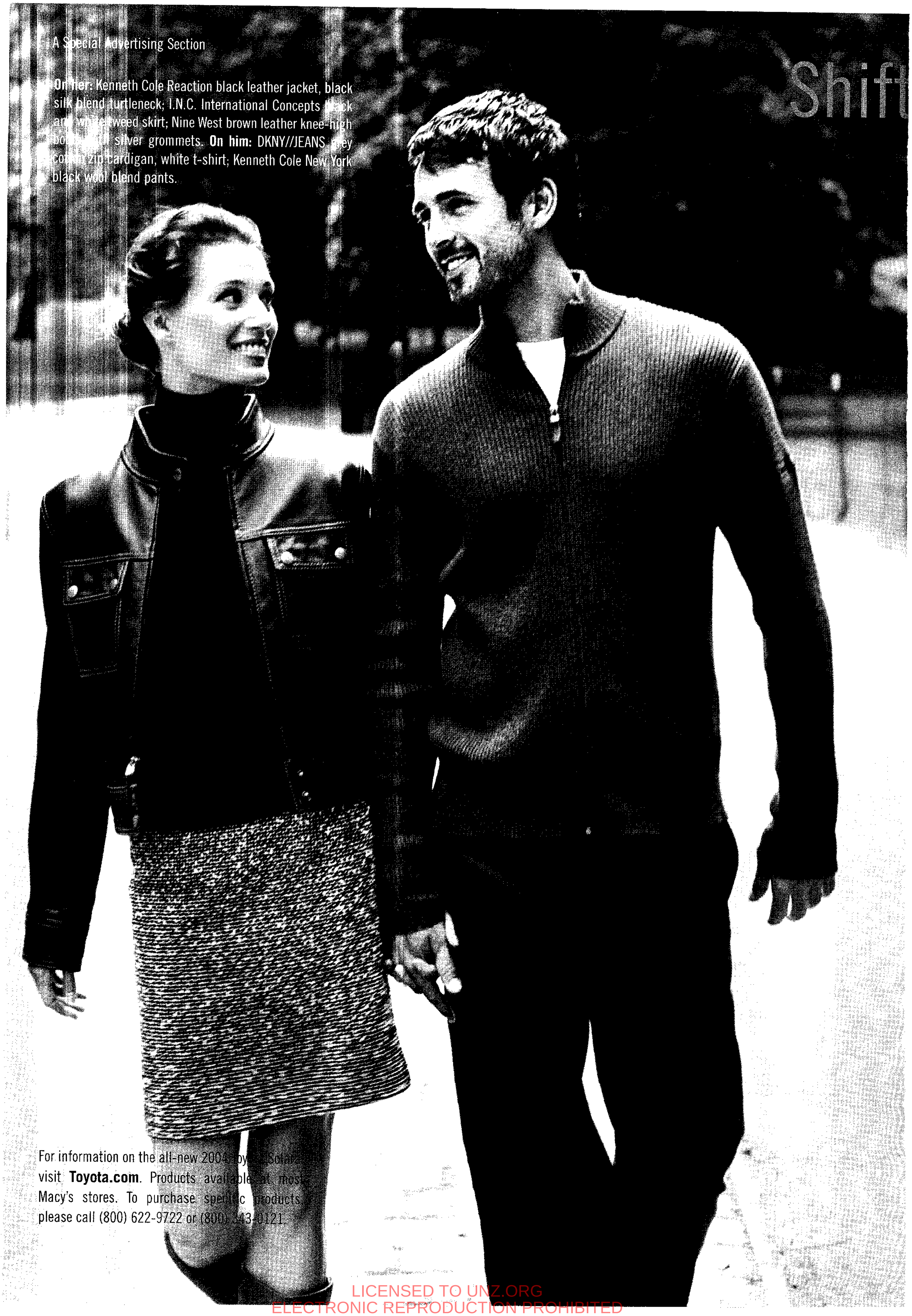

On her: Kenneth Cole Reaction black leather jacket, black silk blend turtleneck; I.N.C. International Concepts black and white tweed skirt; Nine West brown leather knee-high boots with silver grommets. **On him:** DKNY//JEANS grey cotton zip cardigan, white t-shirt; Kenneth Cole New York black wool blend pants.

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into High Style

Clockwise from top: Nine West black leather gloves with leather lacing. Wedgwood crystal bowl by Vera Wang. Toyota Solara SE shown in Absolutely Red with available 17-inch aluminum alloy wheels. Hobe Asian pagoda inspired chandelier earrings.

A Sty
you to the road below, the sky above – and everything that lies ahead.

Toyota Solara SE Sport shown in Absolutely Red

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Hamilton Mall, Mays Landing, NJ	September 13 – 14
The Fashion Centre at Pentagon City, Arlington, VA	September 20 – 21
The Mall at Millenia, Orlando, FL	September 20 – 21
Macy's West at Union Square, San Francisco, CA	September 27 – 28
South Coast Plaza, Costa Mesa, CA	October 4 – 5
The Galleria, Houston, TX	October 30 – November 2
Galleria at Roseville , Roseville, CA	November 1 – 2

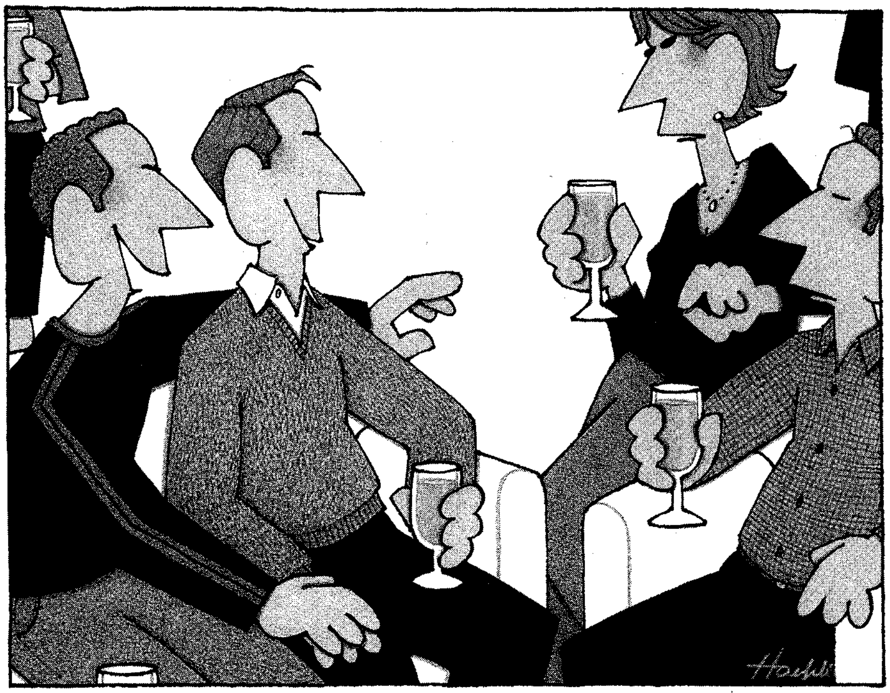
For more details about events by market or to register for a test drive at one of the events, visit www.solarastyle.com or call (800) 527-6501.

GET THE FEELING

TOYOTA

On cover, clockwise from top left: Kenneth Cole Reaction black leather jacket; I.N.C. International Concepts black silk blend turtleneck, black and white tweed skirt; Nine West brown leather knee-high boots with silver grommets. DKNY//JEANS striped long-sleeve button front shirt. I.N.C. International Concepts leather bomber jacket with faux Sherpa lining. Hobe Asian pagoda inspired chandelier earrings. Solara SE Sport in Absolutely Red. For more information on the all-new 2004 Toyota Solara, visit **Toyota.com**. Products available at most Macy's stores. To purchase specific products, please call (800) 622-9722 or (800) 343-0121.

*17-inch wheels with 215/55R17 performance tires are expected to experience greater tire wear than conventional tires. Tire life may be less than 24,000 miles, depending on driving conditions.



"We're a traditional gay couple—we don't have kids."

his daughter. Two weeks later, Thomas, who drove a truck for an oil company, noticed that something was wrong. He suddenly found it hard to depress the brake and clutch pedals. He began working indoors, but noticed that his hands were weak as well; soon he couldn't walk. "After months in bed," Morgan recalled, "he was able to struggle to his feet and walk with crutches, and began working on his parents' farm. He would hold tightly to the plow handles and drag his feet behind the horse, who initially supplied most of the locomotive power. His hands returned to normal, a process that took years, and he became a retail grocer. He never walked without crutches again."

According to another Johnson City resident, the Kites denied that their Jamaica ginger extract had caused the illness. "They pointed out that the bottles were all labelled 'United States Pharmacopeia 70% alco,'" Morgan explained. "Because it was labelled so and carried a governmental certificate, it couldn't be the cause of the illness, they argued. They backed up their beliefs by openly consuming the jake in the store. The Kites continued to operate the store for a time. This was accomplished with difficulty, because they both had to crawl on hands and knees from the back rooms of the store to the counter to wait on customers."

None of the contemporary news or medical accounts mentioned what appears to have been the disease's most embarrassing consequence. "It's the doggonest disease ever heard of since I been born," Bracey sang. "You get numb in front of your body, you can't carry any lovin' on." In the jake songs, "limber leg" or "limber trouble" seems to have been the bluesmen's code for impotence. "Mama cried out and said, 'Oh Lord, there's nothin' in the world poor daddy can do, 'cause he done drank so much jake, oh Lord, that he got the limber leg, too,'" moaned Willie Lofton. Bracey was the most explicit: "Aunt Jane, she came runnin' and screamin', tellin' everybody in the neighborhood, 'That man of mine got the limber trouble, and his lovin' can't do me any good.'"

Every song by a black singer mentions the limber leg. "If it hadn't made men impotent, there might not have been any music at all," Morgan said. In 1976, he tracked down a sixty-nine-year-old jake-leg victim named Gwin Davis. When the epidemic began, Davis had been a millworker living in a boarding house in Elizabethton, Tennessee. He'd bought his jake at a roadside stand that also sold ice cream, sandwiches, and moonshine. He and all but one of the eight or nine other young men at the boarding house went limp at the same time. Initially, they made a game of it. "We thought it was fun, in a way. Slap our feet and fall down, this and that," Davis said. "We didn't know we was going to get to where we couldn't walk at all. Yeah, finally got to where we couldn't walk at all." When Morgan asked him if he'd ever thought of marrying, Davis looked at his feet and wept.

It is impossible to determine how many black people suffered from the jake leg; they weren't welcome at many hospitals, where they might have been counted. Only whites gathered statistics on the epidemic, and, again, the research methods were often questionable. The researchers at the University of Oklahoma asserted that they had not found "a single case of a Negro being affected" in their region, but they seem to have doubted their own observations. (Oklahoma was ten per cent black.) To see if African-Americans enjoyed a natural immunity to the jake leg, the researchers devised yet another experiment with chickens, this time dosing black and white chickens with known paralytic ginger extract. Secure in the belief that black feathers in chickens were the genetic equivalent of African heritage in humans, they watched the black and white chickens fall ill indiscriminately and concluded that "color plays no part." An Ohio doctor noted that ten per cent of the cases he saw were Negroes, and felt compelled to report that, among the remainder, seventy-five per cent were "brunettes." The songs of Ishmon Bracey, Willie Lofton, and Tommy Johnson remain the best confirmation that the jake leg hit black communities hard.

The jake-leg epidemic broke out during the last golden moments of the Republican Elysium, before the full effect of the crash set in, when the country was feverishly denying how poor it was getting. Government was small, regulations were skimpy, enforcement was an afterthought, and mass product-liability suits were yet to be pioneered. The federal budget was less than four billion dollars, and the biggest items were defense spending and veterans' benefits. Drug standards were policed, to the limited extent allowed, by the Agriculture Department's tiny Bureau of Chemistry, which in 1927 changed its name to the Food, Drug, and Insecticide Administration. Its annual budget was little more than a million dollars, a pittance even then. The very idea that the federal government should play a role in fighting the jake leg was controversial.

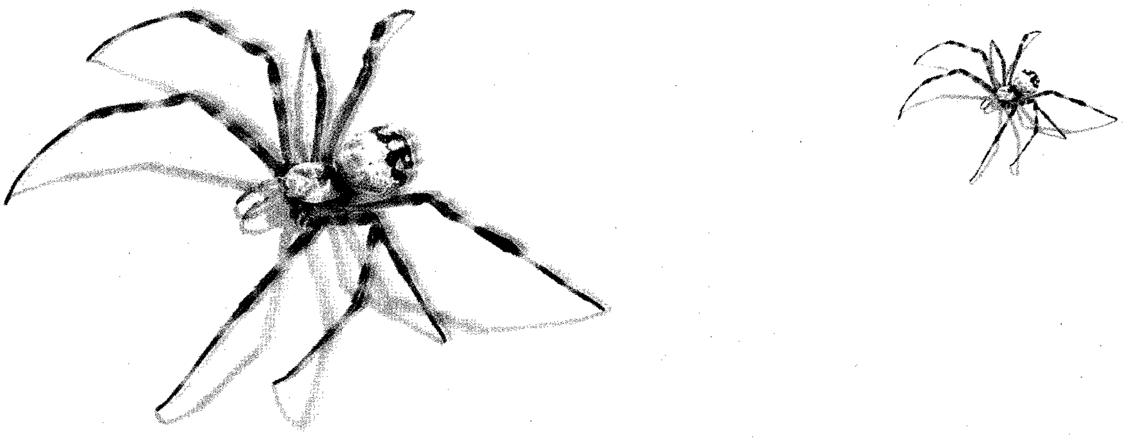
In any case, the government had no Centers for Disease Control from which to dispatch regiments of epidemiologists. As jake leg whipped across the land, plenty of theories circulated: that a batch of jake had been contaminated with lead, arsenic, nicotine, creosote, or carbolic acid; that an unscrupulous bootlegger had used toxic wood alcohol or petroleum alcohol instead of grain alcohol; that the jake-leggers suffered from "lathyrism, which results from the eating of certain species of beans"; that gatherers of wild ginger on the island of "Santo Domingo" in "Central America" had accidentally harvested a poisonous root called "derringue." One old jake victim in Elizabethton, Tennessee, told Morgan that, because the biggest local employer at the time of the outbreak was a German-owned rayon factory, a lot of people thought that the Germans were poisoning the jake to soften up America for another war.

The only public-health watchdog was the federal Hygienic Laboratory, a miserably underfunded outgrowth of the Ellis Island clinic, which had been established in 1887 to screen immigrants. It was in the process of changing its name to the grander National Institute of Health, but it had a budget of less than a million dollars, and a staff of only twelve doctors. One of them was a bespectacled forty-two-year-old Russian immigrant named Maurice Isadore Smith, who, like Ephraim Goldfain, had come to the United States as a child and worked his way through medical school to become a pharmacologist. In early 1930, he decided that he needed to get his hands on a sample of poisoned jake.

It wasn't easy. As word of the epidemic spread, storekeepers, fearful of being prosecuted, removed jake from their shelves. Consumers smashed their bottles to keep family members from getting poisoned. More than once, Smith's investigators had to recover bottles from cesspools and outhouse pits. They found their first sample in Findlay, Ohio, and rushed it back to Washington, where testing on animals revealed something odd. Though poisoned jake killed rabbits and paralyzed calves, it was relatively harmless to monkeys and dogs, animals commonly used to test for toxicity in humans.

Looming in the background of Smith's investigation was the Treasury Department's Bureau of Prohibition, which had jurisdiction over any incident involving alcohol and a budget roughly nine times that of either the F.D.I.A. or the N.I.H. It also had badges and tommy guns. Some health officials held the dry agents in contempt as power-hungry, moralistic cops. "It will do us no good to be identified with the Prohibition Unit," one F.D.I.A. official wrote his boss, reasoning that it would "hinder our work in the future if manufacturers think we are snoopers for the Prohibition outfit." But the Prohibition Bureau had the resources and labs for analyzing alcohol. Its chemists quickly identified a surprising chem-

{ *Leave no stone unturned. You might be surprised how many*



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ical in the suspect jake: tri-ortho-cresyl phosphate, or TOCP, a plasticizer formulated to keep synthetic materials from becoming brittle. Two companies made it: Eastman Kodak and the Celluloid Corporation of Newark, New Jersey, which used it for lacquers, resins, and rubber compounds. TOCP was not considered toxic.

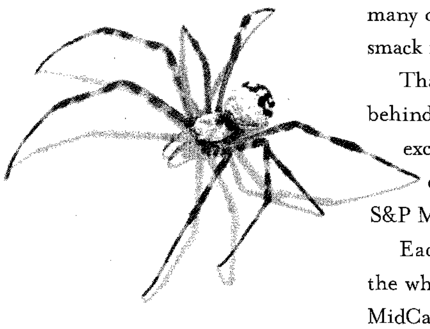
Why would anyone add plasticizer to jake? The most persuasive theory was put forward by several investigators and chemists. From the start of Prohibition, the Treasury Department had sought to tackle the problem of people getting too much pleasure from patent-medicine tippling by ordering that the solids in fluid extracts be doubled. In the case of jake, this transformed a tasty pale-orange liqueur into a black syrup so bitter it could be endured only if heavily diluted.

To enforce compliance, government agents sometimes pulled jake off shelves, boiled off the alcohol, and weighed the solids. Agents didn't thoroughly test the solids, though, and this provided an opportunity for the clever chemists of a multimillion-dollar industry devoted to subverting Prohibition. Bootleggers were already stripping methyl alcohol out of denatured "industrial" alcohol to make it drinkable and distilling potable hooch from aftershaves and perfumes. What they needed was a way to boost the solids in jake enough to satisfy the T-men without spoiling the taste.

They tried molasses and various herbs, but what worked best, at least until 1930, was castor oil. It had a higher boiling point than alcohol and so stayed behind, to be weighed with the ginger, when the alcohol was gone. Its drawback was its tendency to rise to the top of a bottle, tipping off the buyer that something other than ginger and alcohol lurked inside. The plasticizer TOCP solved that.

After testing Smith's samples, Prohibition Bureau chemists described TOCP in a letter to the Food, Drug, and Insecticide Administration as "a tasteless, odorless substance, viscous in character, soluble in alcohol, insoluble in water" which "behaves very much like oleoresin of ginger." It was cheap, perhaps even cheaper than castor oil, and certainly cheaper than ginger. And the textbooks said it was safe. As Smith had seen, even if the bootleggers had scrupulously tried TOCP on dogs and monkeys—the most expensive and human-like of test animals—it would have seemed harmless. "Only a chemist of some ability could have thought of [using TOCP]," Smith wrote in the October, 1930, issue of the journal *Public Health Reports*. "And had there been anything known about the pharmacologic action of this substance and the possible dire consequences, it is probable that it would never have been used and the disaster would never have happened."

Some newspaper editorials blamed the epidemic on Prohibition's arcane rules—a view that was expressed more eloquently when the Mississippi Sheiks, a black string band, recorded "Jake Leg Blues," in June of 1930. "You thought the lively man would die when you made the country dry, when you made it so that he could not get not another drop of rye," the Sheiks



opportunities crawl out.}

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sang. "Well, I know that you will feel bad when you see what he has had . . . He's got those jake limber-leg blues."

The poisoned jake samples eventually led investigators to Harry Gross and Max Reisman, two Boston brothers-in-law who had undertaken various shady ventures together during the nineteen-twenties. They traded a big country house back and forth, and Reisman ran it briefly as a resort called Breezy Meadows. They dabbled in penny-ante food jobbing, handling canned goods, jams, and extracts. But they never used the same business name for very long, and constantly rearranged ownership of their enterprises in a complicated shell game, no doubt to conceal their dealings at the fringes of the illegal-liquor business. Gross wangled a valuable Prohibition Bureau permit in 1921 to handle various types of alcohol, but the Bureau revoked it two years later. Reisman was indicted at one point for shipping five gallons of pear extract to an Indian reservation, in violation of a federal law banning alcohol on reservations. By 1926, the Prohibition Bureau had the brothers-in-law pegged as likely bootleggers. A surveillance memo from the jake investigation describes "several well-dressed men of the bootlegger type . . . loafing about" their office, and one can almost see the fedoras and spats.

In 1927, police found a still on the grounds of the country house. Somehow, though, no one was arrested. In 1928, Gross and Reisman rented the third and fourth floors of a building at 65 Fulton Street in Boston, renamed themselves Hub Products, installed Goldie Sprinsky, a sister-in-law, as their secretary, and threw themselves into full-time production of Jamaica ginger extract. They shipped the jake around the country in big barrels, which they filled at night and labelled "liquid medicine in bulk." The brothers-in-law apparently cut corners from the start; now and then, customers would complain that the jake they received from Hub didn't conform to U.S.P. standards, and Gross would type firm, businesslike answers defending his product.

Like a lot of good bootleggers, Gross and Reisman were shade-tree chemists, and in the summer of 1929 they decided to supplement the castor oil in their jake with something cheaper and better. They ordered barrels of dibutyl phthalate, a plasticizer like TOCP, and three solvents: fusel oil, butyl Carbitol, and Cellosolve. All were clear, oily liquids with high boiling points. But the brothers-in-law wisely rejected all three; they're lethal. Instead, they asked one of their chemical suppliers, Martin Swanson, for some ethylene glycol, another odorless, oily chemical that was common in antifreeze and nontoxic to most people. Alas, the ethylene glycol boiled off too quickly. A few days later, Gross called Swanson and asked him to find something less volatile. Swanson was puzzled; volatility was not an issue when ethylene glycol was used as intended. Swanson sent Gross some diethylene glycol, which is similar but has a higher boiling point. That didn't please Gross, either. "Well, I don't know what on earth you are doing with this stuff and how you are handling it," Swanson told Gross. Apparently, Gross was mimicking the boiling trial that federal agents would use if they tested his jake, and was finding that diethylene glycol evaporated with the alcohol instead of staying behind with the ginger. That was lucky for jake hounds everywhere: it was as deadly as the other chemicals. Swanson told Gross that the only thing he had that was less volatile was Lindol, the Celluloid Corporation's trade name for tri-ortho-cresyl phosphate.

Gross and Reisman twice asked Swanson if Lindol was toxic, and asked him to write Celluloid to make sure. On January 18, 1930, Swanson received confirmation from Celluloid that Lindol was harmless, and he told Gross. Hub bought a hundred and thirty-five gallons of it, enough to adulterate six hundred and forty thousand bottles of jake. Gross would load each shipment onto the elevator, take it alone to the fourth floor, and send down the empty barrels.

Somebody working for Gross and Reisman may have had second thoughts. On March 1st, a man identifying himself as an employee of the Dolan Drug Company, which was a shell operated by Gross and Reisman, called the warehouse that was storing the jake and said, "Those sixteen drums of ginger which you have stored in my name are poison. I don't want them." If an employee was having pangs of conscience, Gross and Reisman were not. On March 15th and 19th—more than a week after the first stories about the jake epidemic hit the papers and two weeks after the call from the Dolan Drug Company—Gross and Reisman shipped two last barrels of jake.

IN THE READING ROOM

Alone in the library room, even when others
Are there in the room, alone, except for themselves:
There is the illusion of peace; the air in the room

Is stilled; there are reading lights on the tables,
Looking as if they're reading, looking as if
They're studying the text, and understanding,

Shedding light on what the words are saying;
But under their steady imbecile gaze the page
Is blank, patiently waiting not to be blank.

The page is blank until the mind that reads
Crosses the black river, seeking the Queen
Of the Underworld, Persephone, where she sits

By the side of the one who brought her there from Enna,
Hades the mute, the deaf, king of the dead letter;
She is clothed in the beautiful garment of our thousand

Misunderstandings of the sacred text.

—*David Ferry*

The F.D.I.A. and Prohibition cops found plenty of distributors who could finger Hub as the source of their bad jake. In December, Gross and Reisman were indicted by a federal grand jury.

Because Gross and Reisman had paralyzed tens of thousands of people, everybody involved in the prosecution wanted to hit them with Prohibition charges, which carried jail time, instead of merely the administrative fines that would likely be levied by the F.D.I.A. But patent medicines came under the jurisdiction of the Prohibition Bureau only if they were used as "beverages" rather than as medicine, a legal distinction almost impossible to prove, especially since jake labels often carried a warning: "This preparation must not be used for beverage purposes under penalty of law." Gross and Reisman eventually pleaded guilty to violating the Prohibition laws as well as the Pure Food and Drug Act. The hitch was that they insisted they were only middlemen. If the judge went easy on them and put them on probation, they would turn over the much more important criminal. The judge complied.

In reality, Gross and Reisman were the ones who not only had made the jake but had ignored early news reports indicating that their product was responsible for the outbreak of paralysis. They also neglected to mention, during plea bargaining, the two barrels shipped in March. When those showed up in Los Angeles the following year and paralyzed another two hundred people, the judge revoked Gross's probation. In April, 1932, he began serving a two-year prison sentence. Reisman never did time.

A few people tried to sue the distributors who sold them the bad jake, but nobody went after the one entity with deep pockets: the Celluloid Corporation. In May of 1931, some Oklahomans organized the United Victims of Jamaica Ginger Paralysis, which claimed to speak for thirty-five thousand stricken people across the country. Unfortunately, the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, which effectively enabled class-action lawsuits, were seven years in the future, and product-liability law was in its infancy. "To have brought such suits would have been almost unthinkable," according to Andrew Popper, a torts professor at the Washington College of Law at American University. "They'd have thrown you in bad-lawyer jail." All the victims could do, really, was petition government officials for relief. There wasn't much hope. When United Victims first formed, Oklahoma's governor, William (Alfalfa Bill) Murray, declared, "There are three kinds of people I haven't much use for. One is the man with 'jakeitis,' another is the investor on the stock exchange, and the other I won't mention." The victims persisted anyway. "I have a wife and two children dependent on me, and we have been kicked and cuffed about without any home just very little to eat ever since I got crippled," a thirty-year-old man named Joe Gordon wrote to his senator in a spidery hand from Hot Springs, Arkansas, in 1933. "And I'll tell the world Life looks almost hopeless for me and my little family, and God knows we have struggled so hard to Live since this awfull injustice." Congress was lobbied for years, but it never passed a bill for victims' relief.

"The jake-leg story is almost completely about class," John Morgan says. "If someone had poisoned the Canadian source of bonded Scotch, something would have been done. But these men were mostly migrants. They came to the city, leaving their women, to get work. They were seen as poor, sloppy drunks." And so the jake-leg tragedy dropped down the national amnesia hole. With its unwelcome implications about Prohibition and poverty, and its falling thirty years before the era of class-action lawsuits, the epidemic would have probably remained forgotten but for the efforts of the Allen Brothers, Ishmon Bracey, Tommy Johnson, the Mississippi Sheiks, Willie Lofton, and Daddy Stovepipe and Mississippi Sarah.

Even Ephraim Goldfain, the first doctor to treat the illness, took little apparent pride in his role. He went on to make a name for himself locally, pioneering the use of gold in arthritis therapy. He was also celebrated in Oklahoma for a rheumatism serum he mixed himself, handblowing the glass vials that held the doses and fashioning, instead of the usual teardrop top, whimsical animal-head stoppers. With his granddaughter Suellen in the passenger seat, he would drive among the tiny farm communities surrounding Oklahoma City, injecting his patients. He died in 1983. Suellen Singer still enjoys telling family stories about him, but she says she knows nothing about the jake leg. He never mentioned it. ◆

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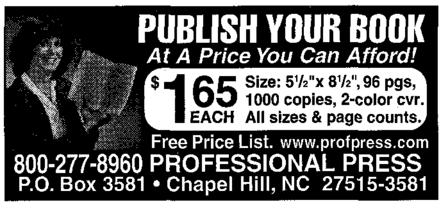
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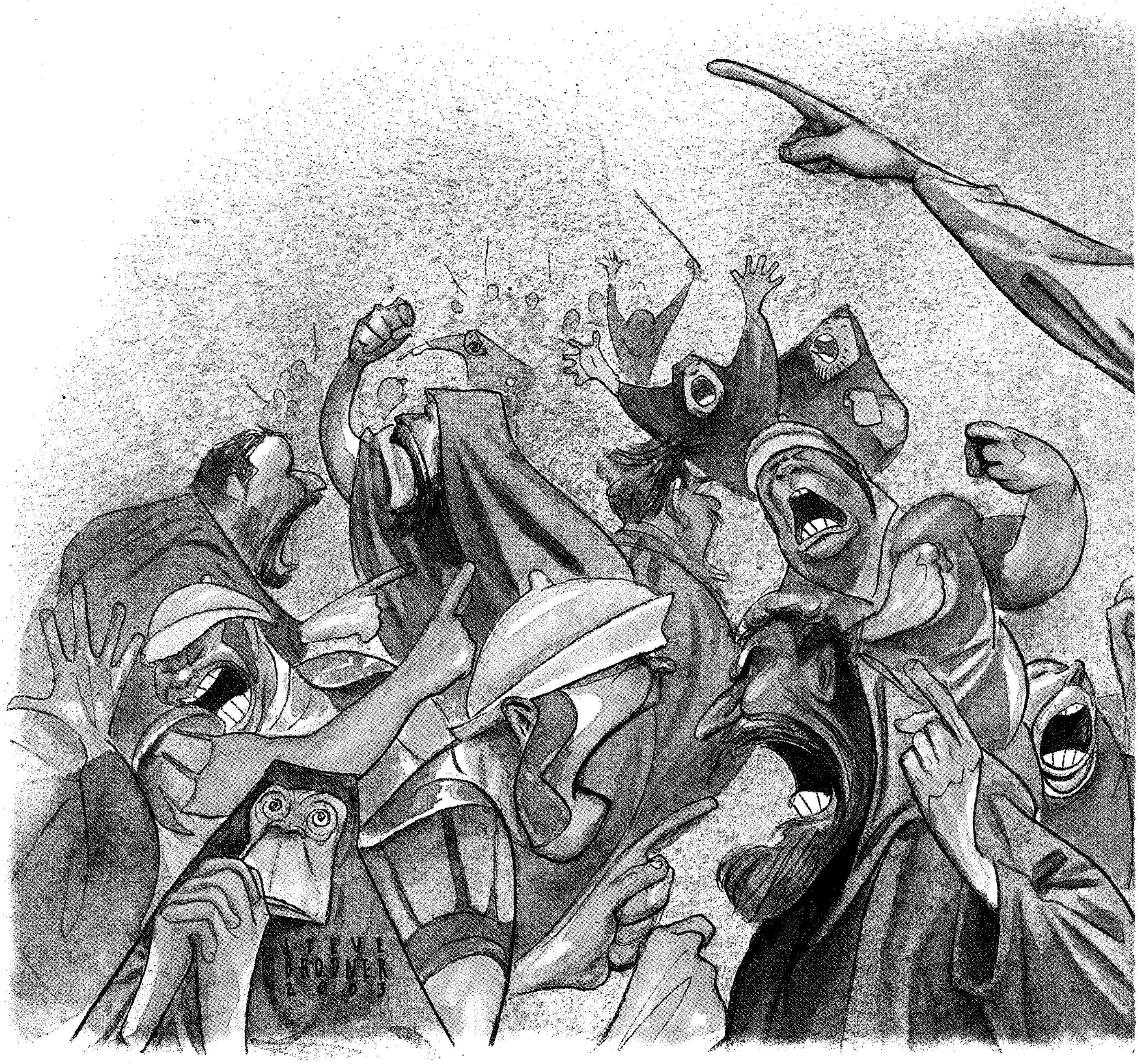


A REPORTER AT LARGE

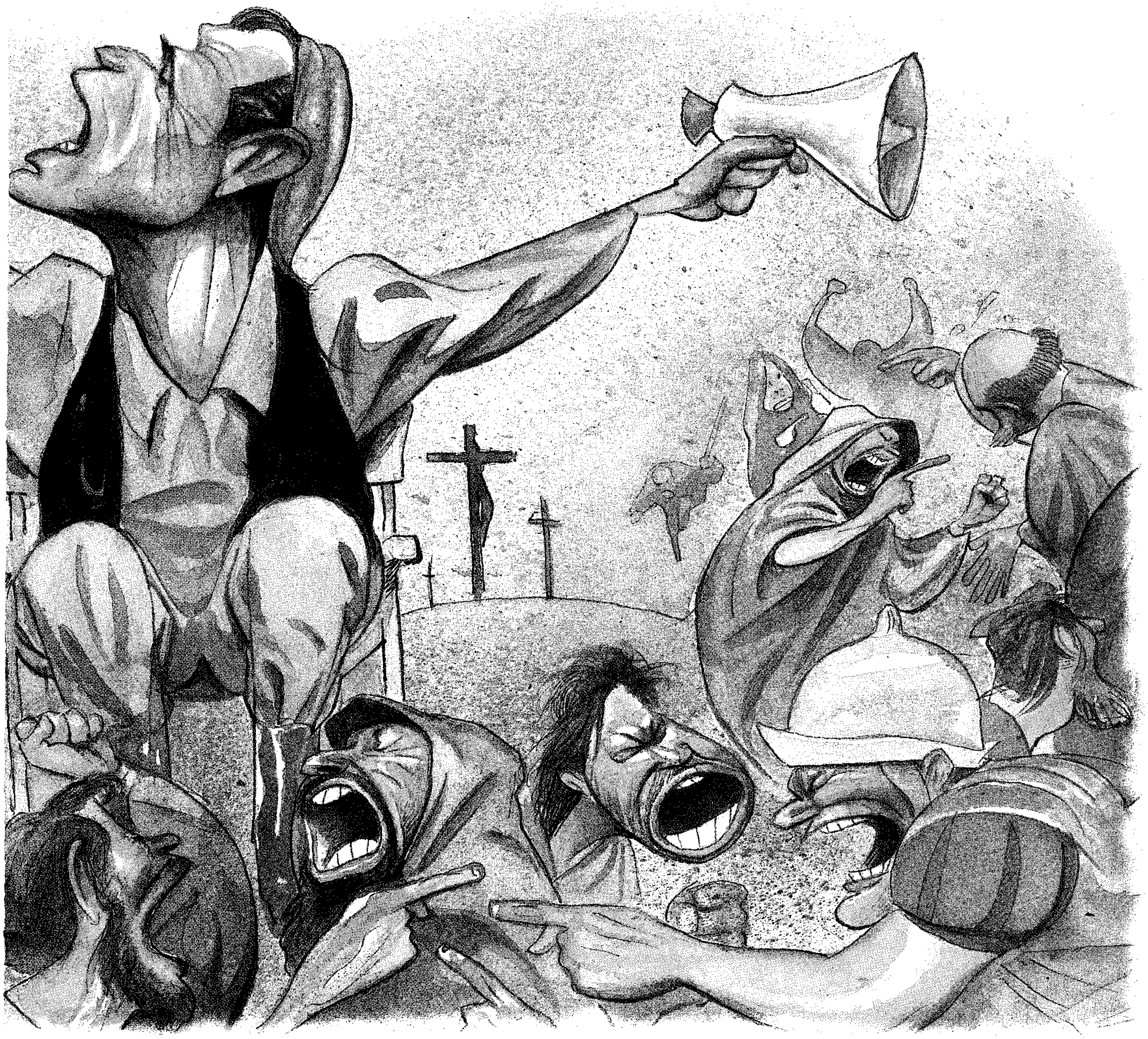
THE JESUS WAR

Mel Gibson's obsession.

BY PETER J. BOYER

One rainy Wednesday afternoon this summer, I made my way to the Sony Building, on Fifty-fifth Street and Madison Avenue, where, through the accommodation of a friend in the entertainment business, I attended a private screening of "The Passion," Mel Gibson's unfinished film about the final hours and Crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. I didn't know quite what to expect. I'd heard that some people had been so moved by the film that they openly wept, and that others were rendered speechless. I knew, too, that a group of religion scholars and Jewish activists had condemned Gibson and his film as dangerous and anti-Semitic, based upon their reading of a "Passion" screenplay. That afternoon, Gibson, wearing jeans, a Hawaiian shirt, and a pair of leather clogs, perched on a table at the front of the room and explained that he was still editing the film, and that the version we were about to see was quite rough. There were a couple of dozen people in the small screening room, two or three of them in clerical attire. Gibson joked a bit, then said, "Let's get started." He took a place

STEVE BRODNER



in the back row as the lights dimmed.

The dark screen filled with the printed words of prophesy from the Old Testament Book of Isaiah, written four hundred years before Christ: "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities. By his stripes we are healed." There was, in the two hours that followed, much wounding and crushing, and, when the lights came back up, there was some wiping away of tears. I found the film riveting and quite disturbing, and I was struck by an insistent memory from a Jesus movie from my childhood, George Stevens's "The Greatest Story Ever Told." In the final scene, the risen Jesus, wispily played by Max Von Sydow in a pageboy haircut, levitates in the clouds as a heavenly choir sings the "Hallelujah Chorus." Gibson had undertaken "The Passion" with the avowed purpose of contravening the overwrought piety of such conventions, and in that, certainly, he had succeeded. Gibson's resurrected Christ rises in the tomb with a steely glare, and then strides purposefully into the light, to the insistent beat of martial drums. With that, Gibson's Passion story, and perhaps even the controversy that has attended it, became clear. Gibson had once said that he wasn't interested in making a religious movie, and in "The Passion" he hadn't. He was making a war movie.

Ten days later, I arrived at Gibson's Icon Productions, which is housed in an unremarkable office building on Wilshire Boulevard in Santa Monica, across from a fast-food Mexican restaurant. Nothing about the place hints of show business until the elevator opens onto an entry wall covered with large movie posters from Icon's pictures ("What Women Want," "Maverick"). As I announced myself to a young woman at the reception desk, the telephone rang. It was the producer Harvey Weinstein. "He'll get back to you,"

"I had to use the Passion of Christ and wounds to heal my wounds," Gibson says. "I've just been meditating on it for twelve years."

the receptionist said, and I was escorted down a winding corridor to the editing room, where Gibson sat on the far end of a sofa, facing an Avid digital editing console. A white legal pad rested on his lap, containing notes for possible editing changes he'd jotted down during his last screening of the film. Gibson's editor, John Wright, was manipulating the images of Pontius Pilate with a mouse and a keyboard as Pilate pronounced judgment upon Jesus.

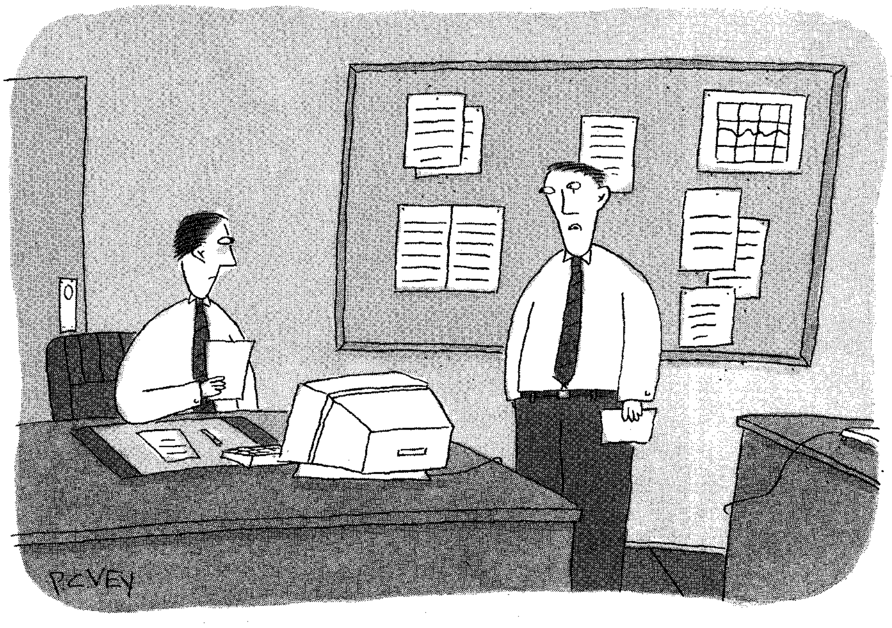
Gibson's story line reflects the basic Christian narrative of Christ's Passion, as it is laid out collectively in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Jesus of Nazareth is a Jewish carpenter in Roman-controlled Palestine, who preaches a message of love and forgiveness, with an increasingly messianic subtext. During the Passover season, he enters the Holy City of Jerusalem, where he is welcomed by adoring crowds who hail him as the long-promised Messiah, bringing deliverance and a new kingdom. But Jesus is considered dangerous by the Jewish high priests, who conspire to arrest and try him, and then deliver him to the Roman prefect Pilate for execution, on the ground of treason against Rome. Jesus knows that his fate is the Cross, and briefly wishes to avoid it (“Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me”); but he also knows that God, his father, sent him into the world for the very purpose of dying, as a sacrifice for the redemption of all mankind.

Gibson has said that his script for “The Passion” was the New Testament, and that the film was directed by the Holy Ghost. Movie audiences, though, will doubtless see in it the hand of the man who directed “Braveheart.” On one level, Gibson, who has been working on the film for more than a year, perceives the Passion as a heroic action story, and the principal quality he hoped to instill in it was the power of realism. “I wanted to bring you there,” he says, “and I wanted to be true to the Gospels. That has never been done.”

In that regard, Gibson made two key decisions. He cast the film without brand-name movie stars, in order to avoid the illusion-puncturing celebrity recognition that afflicted the old epics. Jesus is played by James Caviezel, whose biggest prior role was in “The Count of Monte Cristo,” and Monica Bellucci, of “The Matrix Reloaded” (and rapidly becoming better known), is Mary Magdalene. Gibson also had the actors' lines translated into Aramaic (the vernacular of ancient Palestine), Hebrew, and Latin. His purpose, he says, was not only to achieve authenticity but also to avoid the audience disconnect that might result from hearing two-thousand-year-old Biblical characters speaking perfect modern (or even King James') English. He initially didn't intend to have subtitles, either. “I've always wanted to make a Viking movie,” Gibson, who is forty-seven, explains. “You've got Alfred the Great in Wessex, this English king, saying, ‘All the Danes are coming up the river here, we've got to defend ourselves.’ And these guys hop off the boats and they're all hairy and they're scary and they've got axes, and some of them are berserkers and they're doing flips and twirls and they just wanna rape and kill, you know? But if they start coming out with ‘I want to die with a sword in my hand’ and ‘Oh, fair maiden,’ that would be like—you know, you don't believe them. If they come out with low, guttural German, they are frightening. They are terrifying. They're like demons from the sea. So that's what the language thing did for me. It took something away from you—you had to depend upon the image.”

It is not surprising, perhaps, that in the service of realism the signal trait of “The Passion” is its relentless violence. When Gibson directed the Oscar-winning 1995 film “Braveheart,” about the folkloric Scots hero William Wallace, he reshot only one scene—and that was in order to more graphically depict the image of enemy horses impaling themselves upon sharpened wooden stakes. Violence is Gibson's natural film language, and his Jesus is unsparingly pummelled, flayed, kicked, and otherwise smitten from first to last. After his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane by Jewish temple guards, Jesus is dragged in shackles to the high priests. By the time he arrives, he has been beaten, knocked down, and thrown off a bridge. His right eye is swollen shut. (“I didn't want to see Jesus looking really pretty,” Gibson said. “I wanted to mess up one of his eyes, destroy it.”)

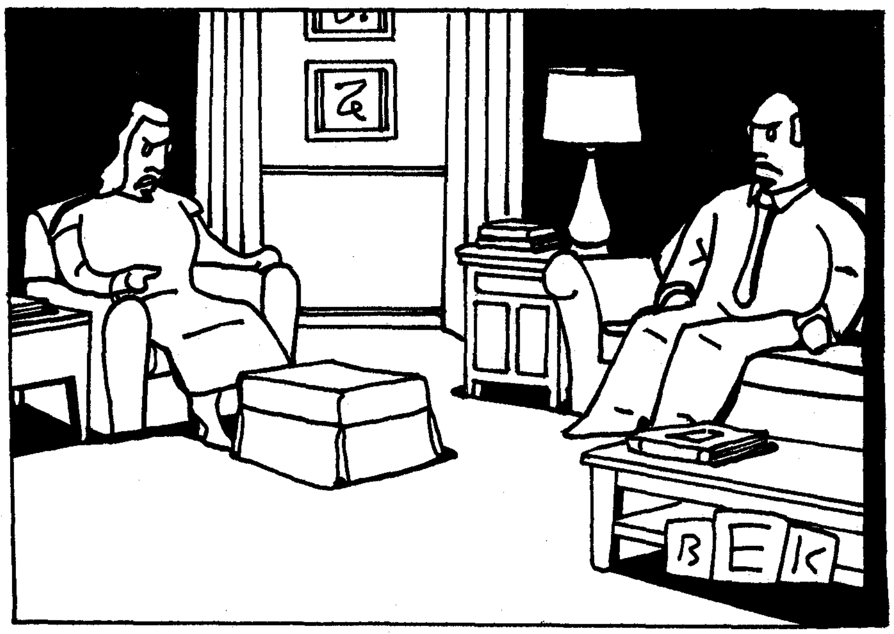
When the Romans take over, things get worse. Gibson studied the details of Roman crucifixion, reading, among other sources, a famous clinical investigation of the practice, “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ,” published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 1986. That study explained why crucifixion inspired the word “excruciating”: “Scourging produced deep stripe-like lacerations and appreciable blood loss, and it probably set the stage for hypovolemic shock. . . . The major pathophysiologic effect of crucifixion was an interference with normal respiration.” Gibson seems to have relied heavily upon this study, which describes the Roman tools of punishment (“The usual instrument was a short



“Do you ever get the feeling that you've done this job before, in a previous economy?”

whip . . . with several single or braided leather thongs of variable lengths, in which small iron balls or sharp pieces of sheep bones were tied at intervals"), the choreography of the infliction ("The man was stripped of his clothing, and his hands were tied to an upright post [and] the back, buttocks, and legs were flogged either by two soldiers . . . or by one who alternated positions"), and its severity (scourging "was intended to weaken the victim to a state just short of collapse or death"). All these elements are directly reflected in Gibson's film.

Gibson has been told by friendly audiences that "The Passion" is several measures too violent, that seeing Jesus subjected to such protracted scenes of brutality will have a numbing effect upon audiences, detaching them from Christ's pain. Gibson acknowledges that possibility, but then adds that the event in question "was pretty nasty."



"Don't take that tone of thought with me."

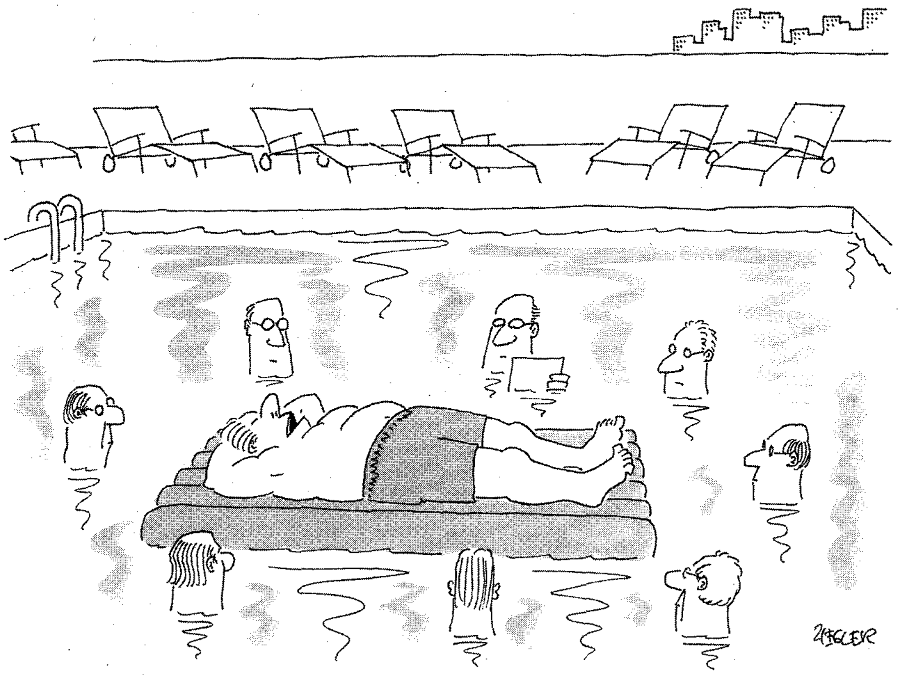
As I watched Gibson work on his film in the editing room, I noticed that the picture had changed since I'd seen it in New York. He said that it was shorter, partly because he had trimmed some of the violent scenes (but not by much). He called the editing process "the final rewrite" of the picture, but he seemed not altogether pleased by some of the cuts he had made, including one he made before the New York screening. The antagonist in Gibson's vision is plainly the Jewish high priest Caiaphas, played by an Italian actor who can seem a bit of a ham as he cajoles the ambivalent Pilate into executing Jesus. Finally, an exasperated Pilate relents and condemns the prisoner, but, according to the Gospel of Matthew, he first makes a show of his own guiltlessness by publicly washing his hands. In Matthew, that gesture is followed by a shout from the crowd: "His blood be on us, and on our children." This passage, which is depicted only in Matthew, is one of the sources of the notion of collective Jewish guilt for the death of Jesus. Gibson shot the scene, but with Caiaphas alone calling the curse down. Wright, Gibson's editor, strongly objected to including even that version. "I just think you're asking for trouble if you leave it in," he said. "For people who are undecided about the film, that would be the thing that turned them against it."

Gibson yielded, but he has had some regrets. "I wanted it in," he says. "My brother said I was wimping out if I didn't include it. It happened; it was said. But, man, if I included that in there, they'd be coming after me at my house, they'd come kill me."

He was referring to his critics, activists at such organizations as the Anti-Defamation League and the Simon Wiesenthal Center, as well as some academics, who worry that Gibson will draw too much upon a literal reading of the Gospels, and not enough upon contemporary scholarship that seeks to distance Jews from culpability in the Crucifixion. Gibson says that some of his friends asked him whether he's making an anti-Jewish movie; he's heard that someone from one of his hangouts, the Grand Havana Room, a Beverly Hills smoking club, said that he'd spit on him if he ever came in again. When he has shown the film to associates in the industry, he feels that they are looking for anti-Semitism. He says that is one of the reasons he finally decided to include subtitles in the picture, to make it clear that some of the Jews portrayed in the film are sympathetic figures. "You've just got to have them," he says. "I mean, I didn't think so, but so many people say things to me like 'Why aren't there more sympathetic Jews in the crowd?' Well, they're there! But you've got to really point it out to them, and subtitles can do that." He goes on, "It's just amazing to me how one-eyed some people are about this thing. I mean, it's like a veil comes down and they just can't see it. For instance, did you know that one of the priests helps take his body down from the Cross? It's there! Nobody sees it. They can only view it from one eye."

It frustrates Gibson that others don't see "The Passion" as he does, but it does not surprise him. It is not an accident that Gibson set the terms of "The Passion" the way he did, from the first scene, where Jesus stomps a snake to death, to the last, where the risen warrior is called to battle. Gibson's fiercest detractors see in him a medieval sensibility, an accusation that he would not necessarily find objectionable. He has a Manichaean view of the world, in which all of human history is the product of great warring realms, the unseen powers of absolute good and total evil. He believes in the Devil as fully as he believes in God; that is why his career has evolved to "The Passion," and it is how he accounts for the opposition that the film has aroused.

The editing session was interrupted late in the afternoon by an urgent summons from a colleague in an office down the hall, where a television monitor was tuned to CNN. The anchor Paula Zahn was interviewing two guests on



"Jenkins, read me back the minutes from the last dip."

• •

the subject of Gibson's film and its alleged anti-Semitism. Both of the guests, the conservative film critic Michael Medved and William Donohue, the president of the Catholic League, had seen the movie, and vigorously defended it. Medved said that the press, in repeating the charges against Gibson and his film, was once again showing itself to be irresponsible; Donohue said that Gibson and his project had been unfairly associated with the eccentric views of Gibson's father, who in a New York *Times* column was accused of being a "Holocaust denier." In all, it was a victory for Gibson's side, but when the segment concluded Gibson was enraged. "That's bullshit," he said.

He went on, "I don't want to be dissing my father. He never denied the Holocaust; he just said there were fewer than six million. I don't want them having me dissing my father. I mean, he's my father."

Gibson is clearly pained by the fact that Hutton Gibson, who is eighty-five, has been dragged into the "Passion" controversy, not least because it presents Gibson with the unwelcome choice of distancing himself from his father—which he adamantly will not do—or suffering by association the most toxic sort of social taint.

Hutton Gibson is a devout Catholic who, as a young seminarian, had aspirations to a missionary priesthood. When the Second World War began, he joined the service, abandoned plans for the clergy, and eventually married. The couple lived in a series of small towns in the lower Hudson Valley, where Hutton worked as a railroad brakeman until, after an injury, he went on disability. He and his wife, Ann, had eleven children, and the loss of his job posed a strain; but in 1968 Hutton, an autodidact with a ferocious literary appetite, appeared on the game show "Jeopardy!" and won what was then a huge pot of money—twenty-five thousand dollars. Mel, the middle child, was twelve. Hutton, flush with prize money, moved the family to Australia.

At the time, Catholics like Hutton Gibson were reeling from the doctrinal convulsions created by the Second Vatican Council, the Church's sweeping effort, propagated over a three-year period, to modernize. Suddenly, many of the old verities, from the profound to the trivial, were gone—including fish on Friday and, most lamentably to many, the Latin Tridentine Mass. The most dramatic of Vatican II's reform impulses was its ecumenism, which declared that all Christians, not just Roman Catholics, were members of the Body of Christ. The council's final session, in 1965, included the declaration known as the Nostra Aetate, formally reconciling Christians and Jews and condemning the idea of Jews as "cursed by God."

"True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ," the document declared. "Still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new People of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures."

The first Christians were, of course, Jews, and considered themselves such; however, their insistence upon the godhead Jesus was, from the Judaic perspective, theologically irreconcilable. Historic anti-Semitism, premised partly on the idea of collective Jewish guilt in the death of Christ, came with the conversion of Rome. The Church fostered such anti-Semitism for centuries (doctrinally encouraging the "curse" interpretation of the blood passage from Matthew), leading to expulsions, ghettos, and forced conversions. When, after the Reformation, official anti-Semitism became a culturally (rather than a theologically) driven policy, the Church continued to countenance it. That was the history that the reconciliation decree of Vatican II meant to redress, and it was why the current Pope, John Paul II, prayed at Jerusalem's Western Wall for God's forgiveness for "the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of Yours to suffer."

The council's reforms bitterly divided the Church, reflecting, to a large degree, the divisions caused by the social movements in the contemporary secular culture. Church progressives embraced the reforms, and, as reform hardened into new orthodoxy, bureaucracies sprang up in the Church which were devoted to interfaith relations. But other Catholics were dismayed by the sudden, drastic changes, arguing that the Church's immutability through the ages was one of its institutional strengths. Most of those Catholics, however discomfited, eventually accommodated themselves to Vatican II; still others left the Church. But some of those who were most appalled at what they saw as a cult of modernity corrupting the Church remained intensely faithful. These Traditionalists, as they called themselves, declared themselves the True Church, and defied the reforms of Vatican II, as well as the authority of the Pope who convened the council, John XXIII, and of all who have occupied St. Peter's chair since.

Traditionalists—the *Times* has put their number at a hundred thousand, but other estimates vary widely—observe the Latin Tridentine Mass (performed by a priest facing the altar, with his back to the congregants), require women to cover their heads in church, do not allow laypeople to serve the Eucharist, and do not eat meat on Fridays. Some Traditionalists, attempting to explain what they see as Vatican apostasy, have inclined toward conspiracy theories. Some blamed a Communist plot, others the old Catholic antagonist Freemasonry, and others, inevitably, saw the hand of the Jew (the Devil working in each). Hutton Gibson was one of those Catholics who felt alienated from their Church, and found their way to Traditionalism. As he grew old, he found his way to dark theories to explain the world. He told a *Times* reporter that the Second Vatican Council was "a Masonic plot backed by the Jews," and that the Holocaust was a tragedy that had been hyped out of proportion, which brought leverage against such institutions as the Catholic Church.

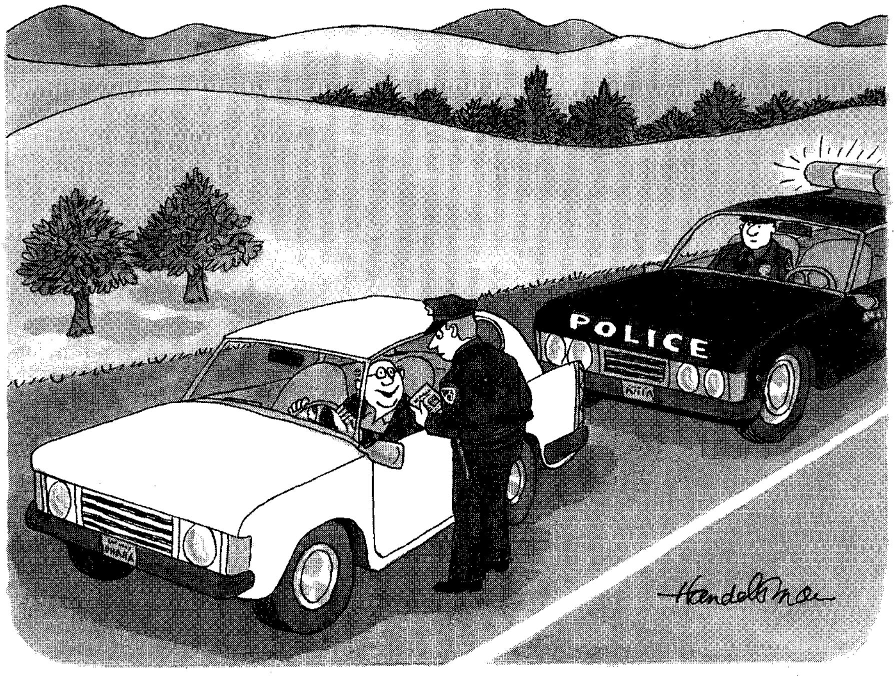
Mel Gibson briefly considered the priesthood himself, before he discovered acting, and, with "Mad Max," "Gallipoli," and "The Year of Living Dangerously," quickly became a star. In 1980, he married Robyn Moore, an Australian dental nurse; they have seven children. Gibson says that he never doubted God, but, as his father was wrestling with the Church and his own career bloomed and took him to Hollywood, he grew distant from his faith. His acting success brought fame and more money than he had imagined possible; when he got a chance to direct, he won an Oscar.

But in his middle thirties Gibson slipped into a despair so enveloping that he thought he would not emerge. "You can get pretty wounded along the way, and I was kind of out there," he says. "I got to a very desperate place. Very desperate. Kind of jump-out-of-a-window kind of desperate. And I didn't want to hang around here, but I didn't want to check out. The other side was kind of scary. And I don't like heights, anyway. But when you get to that point where you don't want to live, and you don't want to die—it's a desperate, horrible place to be. And I just hit my knees. And I had to use the Passion of Christ and wounds to heal my wounds. And I've just been meditating on it for twelve years."

Gibson returned to his faith with the zeal of a reformed backslider, and the faith he returned to was the faith he had known as a boy, the faith of his father. "Believe me," he says of the rigors of Traditionalist worship, "every other brand of everything is easier than what I do." When he was in Rome making "The Passion," Gibson attended Mass every day—which was a challenge, because he had to find a priest (preferably one ordained before Vatican II) who would say the Tridentine Mass. He brought one priest from Canada, and when that one had to return home he found a French Traditionalist living in England who agreed to minister to him.

At home in California, Gibson worshipped until recently at a Traditionalist church some distance from their house in Malibu. Then he decided that he had the means, and the motivation, to make worship a bit easier. He determined to build his own chapel, a Traditionalist church called Holy Family, in the hills near his home.

When Gibson is trying to understand the antagonism that his project has excited, he characteristically conjures his scenario of the great spiritual realms, unseen but ever warring over humankind. "I didn't realize it would be so vicious," he says of the criticism. "The acts against this film started early. As soon as I announced I was doing it, it was 'This is a dangerous thing.' There is vehement anti-Christian sentiment out there, and they don't want it. It's vicious. I mean, I think we're just a little part of it, we're just the meat in the sandwich here. There's huge things out there, and they're belting it out—we don't see this stuff. Imagine: There's a huge war raging, and it's over us! This is the weird thing. For some reason, we're important in this thing. I don't understand it. We're a bunch of dickheads and idiots and failures and creeps. But we're called to the divine, we're called to be better than our nature would have us be. And those big realms that are warring and battling are going to manifest themselves very clearly, seemingly with-



"It's not that I'm too old. I've always been a lousy driver."

out reason, here—a realm that we can see. And you stick your head up and you get knocked."

More temporal forces are also at work, those enduring enmities rooted in the great social and political divides of the nineteen-sixties. The culture wars that resulted are felt in American life still, in the media, in politics, and, as the anguished split over homosexuality in the Episcopal Church currently attests, in religion. In the dispute over Gibson's film, the familiar advocates have reflexively assumed their usual stations, even though the dramatic form at issue—the Christian Passion play—is so obscure in the secular age that many Americans, perhaps most, would not likely be able even to describe it. That "The Passion" became the subject of such contention a year before its planned release, however, was an accident—not of politics, or even of religion, but of real estate.

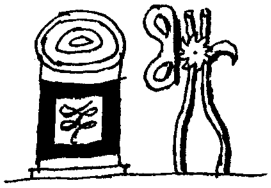
When Gibson decided to build a church, he bought sixteen acres of land in the community of Agoura Hills, through an entity he controls called the A. J. Reilly Foundation. Some local homeowners objected to the project as it made its way through the zoning process. One homeowner suggested that his son, a freelance journalist named Christopher Noxon, write about the church. The resulting article, published by the New York *Times* on March 9, 2003, created three salient impressions: that Gibson's faith is a "strain of Catholicism rooted in the dictates of a 16th-century papal council and nurtured by a splinter group of conspiracy-minded Catholics, mystics, monarchists and disaffected conservatives"; that Gibson's father is representative of this paleo-Catholic strain; and that Mel Gibson's movie about the Crucifixion may serve as a propaganda vehicle for such views. Noxon attended Mass in the new church, and noted that the service rituals were "remarkably" like those he remembered from childhood.

The *Times* story caught the attention of a group of activists, scholars, and clerics who make up what is known as the interfaith community. Within the Church, these are the progressives and their spiritual heirs who advocated for Vatican II, and, in the years since, they have invested their careers in making ecumenism an important discipline unto itself. Doctrine is promulgated on how the Christians regard the Jews, and guidelines govern the presentation of Jews and Judaism in liturgical teaching, preaching, Biblical interpretation, and dramatic depictions of Christ's Passion. In this last regard, the interfaith committee of the national Bishops Conference issued, in 1988, a list of criteria to be followed when dramatizing the Passion, warning of the historical dangers in the form and urging that "anything less than [an] 'overriding preoccupation' to avoid caricaturing the Jewish people, which history has all too frequently shown us, will result almost inevitably in a violation" of Vatican II principle.

The interfaith community would not have been comforted by the news that Mel Gibson was basing his movie upon the Gospels, even if he weren't a Traditionalist Catholic. On the contrary, using the Gospels as the source would be cause for alarm; it is held that the Gospels, read alone, contain potentially dangerous teachings, particularly as they pertain to the role of Jews in the Crucifixion. "One cannot assume that by simply conforming to the New Testament, that antisemitism will not be promoted," a group of Catholic ecumenist scholars declared, regarding Gibson's film. "After all, for centuries sermons and passion plays based on the New Testament have incited Christian animosity and violence toward Jews."

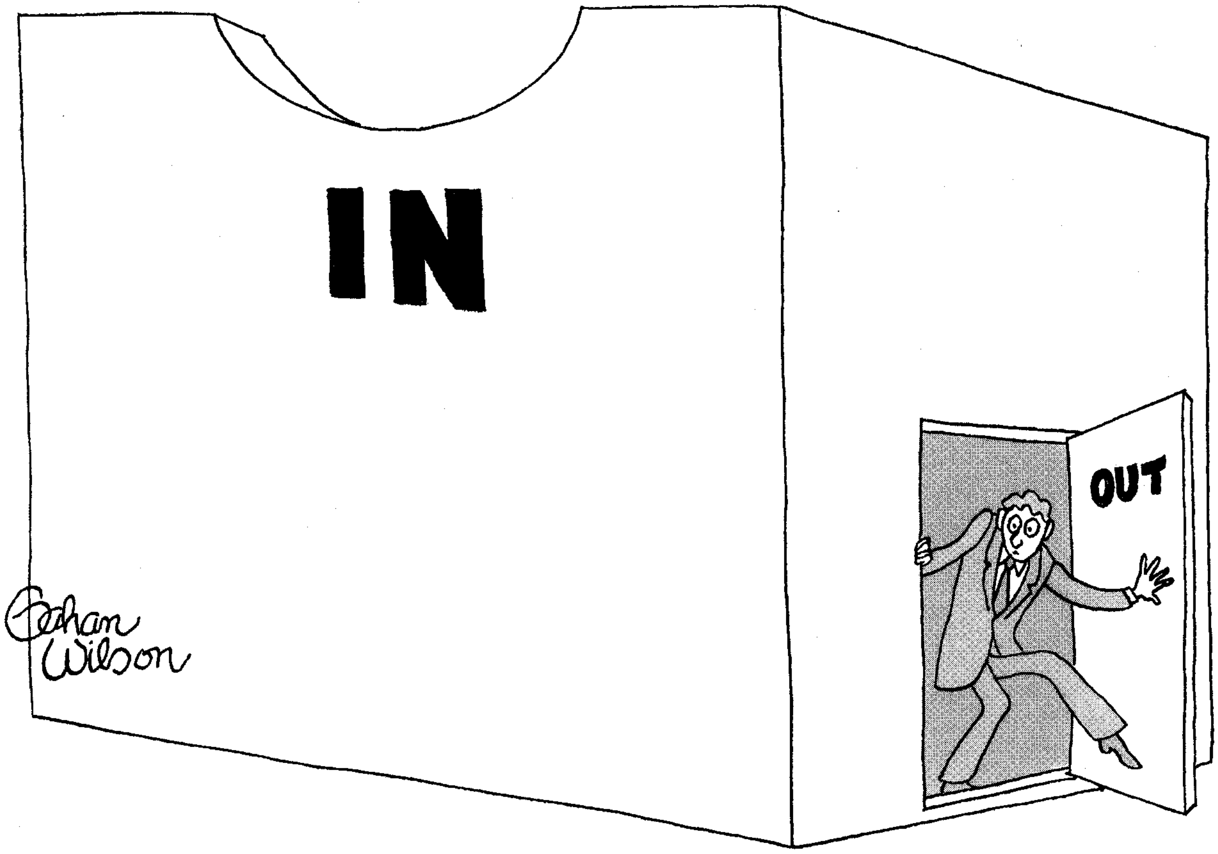
After reading the *Times* story about Gibson's church and film, one leading Catholic ecumenist, Dr. Eugene Fisher, talked to an old friend from years of interfaith work, Abraham Foxman, the head of the Anti-Defamation League. Foxman was equally alarmed by the Gibson project, and had written to Gibson, seeking assurances that the movie "will not give rise to the old canard of charging Jews with deicide and to anti-Semitism." Fisher and Foxman agreed to convene a small ad-hoc group of like-minded colleagues, and to offer Gibson their help in making his film conform to contemporary doctrine.

The group comprised nine members, mostly Catholic scholars who are, like Fisher, specialists in Christian-Jewish relations. Fisher also invited into the group a respected Boston University professor, Paula Fredriksen, who would present Gibson with a different set of problems to consider. Fredriksen's specialty is the study of the historical Jesus. It is a relatively young field of inquiry, just two centuries old, and it is only in the past few decades that the discipline has assumed an authoritative voice.



Historical-Jesus scholars generally excuse themselves from the matter of Jesus' divinity, focussing instead upon Jesus the man—why he thought and behaved as he did—in the context of early-first-century Judaism. They concede that the four Gospels are probably the best (if not only) documents directly bearing upon the death of Jesus, but they depart from many Christians as to their origins and purpose. Ask Mel Gibson who wrote the Book of John, for example, and he would not hesitate to answer that it was St. John—that's why it's called "The Gospel According to John." Ditto Matthew, Mark, and Luke. "John was an eyewitness," Gibson says. "Matthew was there. And these other guys? Mark was Peter's guy, Peter's scribe. And Luke was Paul's guy. I mean, these are reliable sources. These are guys who were around." The historical-Jesus scholars, however, are not so sure. "We do not know who wrote the Gospels," contends E. P. Sanders, of Duke University, who is the author of "The Historical Figure of Jesus," and one of the preëminent scholars in the field. Sanders holds what is probably the consensus view, that the Gospels were written anonymously by early Church teachers, and were later assigned to the four evangelist saints, perhaps to bestow legitimacy.

The Gospel narratives generally concur on the essentials of Christ's Passion—the Last Supper, his betrayal by Judas Iscariot to Jewish leaders who were hostile to his messianic claims, his arrest in Jerusalem, an interrogation before the Jewish authorities, condemnation by Pilate, and crucifixion, followed by burial and resurrection. The accounts differ on particulars; Matthew and Mark, for instance, have Jesus interrogated before a full Sanhedrin trial, while John skips over the trial and has Jesus questioned at



a high priest's residence before delivery to Pilate. In the view of historical-Jesus scholars, such differences invalidate the Gospels' strict historicity, and, therefore, any dramatization based literally upon them is deemed ahistorical. Many Christians, however, consider the Gospel narratives not contradictory but complementary. Regarding the interrogations to which Jesus was subjected, for example, they argue that the important fact is that there was some sort of Jewish legal proceeding, in which Jesus was effectively indicted. "The Gospels don't contradict one another," Gibson insists. "They mesh. There's a couple of places where, yeah, that's not quite the same scene. But they just complete parts of the story that the other guy didn't complete. That's all. They do not contradict one another. If you read all four of those, they mesh. Because if they didn't, you wouldn't have so many people hooked into this."

The study of the historical Jesus is a field inclined toward hermeneutical acrobatics, and its scholars routinely disagree not only with lay theologians but with each other. On the subject of Jewish involvement in the Crucifixion, for example, most historical-Jesus investigators believe that the Jewish high priests wanted Jesus dead, as the Gospels attest, and that the only question is why. Sanders believes it is because of Jesus' actions at the Temple during his Passover visit to Jerusalem, when he drove the money changers from the premises and overturned their tables. Fredriksen, though she is an admirer of Sanders, believes that the Temple scene probably didn't happen. She places the initiative of the Crucifixion entirely upon Pilate, almost to the point of absenting Jews from the scene altogether. Fredriksen's theory is that Jesus was so popular among the Jewish people (as evidenced by his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the day Christians call Palm Sunday) that Pilate wanted him dead in order to teach Jews a lesson: Do not rebel.

In order to give informed advice to Gibson, Fisher and his group of scholars needed to see the film, or, at least, a script. When they approached Icon Productions in late March, however, they learned that Gibson was still in Italy, working on the film. Fisher then appealed to Father William Fulco, a Jesuit professor of classics and archeology at Loyola Marymount University, in Los Angeles, who had been hired by Gibson to translate the script into Latin, Aramaic, and Hebrew. Fisher sent along the Bishops Conference's guidelines for dramatizing the Passion, and Fulco assured him that Gibson's script committed no offenses. The scholars wanted to judge that for themselves, and asked for a copy of the script. Fulco said that the screenplay was not his to give. Icon did not respond to the request for a script. The scholars and Icon were at a standoff.

Then, in early April, Rabbi Yehiel Poupko, a Judaic scholar involved in interfaith work in Chicago, returned home to find a large, unmarked manila envelope at his front door. When Rabbi Poupko opened it, he found a script that had no identifying title page. But Poupko realized that the script must be "The Passion," and called up a friend in interfaith work, Father John Pawlikowski, who was one of Fisher's team of scholars. Pawlikowski asked to see the script, and Poupko sent it over.

Pawlikowski passed the script along

"We had to try to figure it out without broadband access to porn."

to Fisher, who, plainly delighted by the development, made copies and sent them to each of the members of his panel on April 18th—which happened to be Good Friday. By e-mail, he informed Father Fulco that "the Easter Bunny came early to my office and delivered a copy of the script." Fisher attributed the mysterious appearance of the script to a "Biblical Deep Throat," and added that he had sent it along to the scholars "in time for their Good Friday meditations." Fisher's tone was solicitous; he told Fulco that "my own response is that with a couple of very minor adjustments, all is resolved."

But when the other scholars read the screenplay they were aghast. The script confirmed their worst fears about the Gibson project. Gibson seemed to be violating many, if not all, of the Bishops Conference's guidelines on dramatizing the Passion; the script included the scene from Matthew in which Pilate washes his hands of responsibility, and, worse, it had Caiaphas uttering the line "His blood be on us, and upon our children." The descriptive portions of the script, which do not necessarily reflect what gets filmed, were filled with inflammatory cues: Peter is "aware of the bloodthirsty nature of the rising chaos"; at the sight of the Cross, "the crowd's bloodthirst redoubles"; when Jesus is crushed by the weight of the Cross, the Roman guards holding the crowd back "have a difficult time restraining the impatient, predatory bloodthirst of the people"; and, most egregiously, as Jesus is reduced to a bloody mass, Caiaphas' eyes are "shiny with breathless excitement."

Now the tone of the scholars' dealings with Icon became openly adversarial. On Easter Monday, one member of the panel, Sister Mary Boys, a professor at the Union Theological Seminary, in New York, and an interfaith veteran, spoke to a Los Angeles *Times* reporter about the scholars' concerns that Gibson's film could incite anti-Semitism. Rabbi Eugene Korn, the head of the A.D.L.'s interfaith affairs, was quoted in the article as warning Gibson that he should not ignore the scholars' group. "If he doesn't respond, the controversy will certainly heat up," Korn said. "We are all very vigilant about things like this."

Gibson, who had returned to California, was furious. He began to hear negative comments from his friends in the industry, including the advice that he stay away from the Grand Havana Room. Three days after the article appeared, Gibson and his producer, Steve McEveety, had a telephone conversation with Eugene Fisher. According to notes taken by the Gibson team (Fisher won't comment), McEveety asked how the scholars could be trusted after they had gone public with negative comments based on a stolen script. He said that the whole thing felt a bit like extortion. Gibson said he found the article threatening, "a hatchet job." Fisher was again solicitous, saying that "this whole kind of thing I find very distasteful," and agreed that the implications of anti-Semitism were "absolutely untrue." He conceded that the fact that the script was stolen would "taint" any criticisms deriving from it, and said that Rabbi Korn "blew that one" by speaking to the press.

"You guys got ripped," Fisher said. But he defended the Anti-Defamation League as being a responsible group. He suggested that Gibson and his associates hear the scholars out.

"Whatever opinion you guys come up with are tainted notes," McEveety replied.

Meanwhile, the scholars worked on their suggestions, which they compiled into a report that they sent to Icon Productions in early May. The report, numbering eighteen pages, contained a long list of the film's transgressions, which "are embedded throughout the script." Contrary to the "very minor adjustments" of which Fisher had spoken, the scholars' report said that Gibson's film would basically require a remake. "We believe that the steps needed to correct these difficulties will require major revisions," the report stated.

For Fredriksen, one of the most dismaying elements of Gibson's undertaking was his insistence that his film would be accurate. She notes that Gibson relied on an uninformed reading of the Gospels, as well as upon extra-scriptural Catholic literature, such as the writings of two stigmatic nuns. "He doesn't even have a Ph.D. on his staff," she says.

Among the many errors that Gibson might have avoided had he followed the ecumenist guidelines is his portrayal of the two men who were crucified alongside Jesus as criminals. Although the men, described in Matthew and Mark, are identified as "thieves" in the King James Version of the Bible, as "robbers" in the International and American Standard versions, and as "plunderers" in the original Greek, the Bishops Conference prefers that they be identified as "insurgents."

Gibson is unconvinced by such scholarly interpretations. "They always dick around with it, you know?" he says. "Judas is always some kind of friend of some freedom fighter named Barabbas, you know what I mean? It's horseshit. It's revisionist bullshit. And that's what these academics are into. They gave me notes on a stolen script. I couldn't believe it. It was like they were more or less saying I have no right to interpret the Gospels myself, because I don't have a bunch of letters after my name. But they are for children, these Gospels. They're for children, they're for old people, they're for everybody in between. They're not necessarily for academics. Just get an academic on board if you want to pervert something!"

Gibson responded to the scholars through his attorney, who warned that they were in possession of a stolen script, and demanded its immediate return. What happened next placed Eugene Fisher's panel of scholars in an awkward position. Fisher is the associate director of ecumenical and interreligious affairs for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, but he had acted on his own in forming the group. Fisher's standing (and the fact that he had used the Bishops Conference's letterhead in communicating with Icon) had lent the scholars' group an air of Church authority—an important element in that part of the public debate which emphasized Gibson's schismatic bent. Gibson and McEveety had been surprised to learn that Fisher's panel was an ad-hoc initiative, bearing no authority from the Church. After the Bishops Conference received the letter from Gibson's lawyer, it acted quickly to distance itself from the scholars and their report on Gibson's film. "Neither the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, nor any other committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, established this group, or authorized, reviewed or approved the report written by its members," the conference declared in June. Its counsel, Mark E. Chopko, advised the scholars to return the scripts to Icon, and issued an apology to Gibson. "We regret that this situation has occurred, and offer our apologies," Chopko wrote. "I have further advised the scholars group that this draft screenplay is not considered to be representative of the film and should not be the subject of further public comment. When the film is released, the USCCB will review it at that time."

The controversy, however, did not wane. The Anti-Defamation League issued no apology to Gibson, and the scholars stood by their report; some of them continued to criticize Gibson's film publicly. I arrived in California the day after the New York *Times* carried a front-page article on the dispute. The next morning, the paper published a column that criticized Gibson for refusing to show his film to Jewish leaders, such as Abraham Foxman, of the A.D.L. Gibson stewed all day, and by evening he had reached full pique. He was particularly aroused by the column, written by Frank Rich, which had argued that Gibson's film could do real harm abroad, "where anti-Semitism has metastasized since 9/11," and which had accused Gibson's publicist, Alan Nierob, of using "p.r. spin to defend a Holocaust denier"—presumably, Gibson's father. Nierob, who is Jewish, and is the son of Holocaust survivors (and a founding member of the national Holocaust Museum), laughed it off. But Gibson called Nierob that evening, and apologized for "getting you into this."

Then Gibson expressed his feelings about Rich. "I want to kill him," he said. "I want his intestines on a stick. . . . I want to kill his dog." At this, Paul Lauer, Gibson's marketing man, who had been quietly engaged in deskwork, glanced at me, and calmly said, "The thing you have to understand is that the distance between Mel's heart and his mouth is greater than the distance between his imagination and his mouth. He is an artist, and he says these things, and his creative energy kicks in, and he comes out with these imaginative, wild things. But his heart . . ." He shrugged, and went back to work.

Gibson has half-jokingly remarked that "The Passion" may be a career-killer for him. If it is not, if it somehow manages to open, and even to succeed, it will be in no small measure owing to Lauer's efforts. Lauer, whose father is Jewish, is a practicing Roman Catholic who has often heard Gibson's Traditionalist views about the current Vatican (that the last "real" Pope predated Vatican II), and seems mostly unperturbed. More pressing, to him, is the difficult question of opening a movie that, even without the attacks against it, presents some formidable marketing problems: it is a religious film, whose actors speak their lines

"Can I nuke something for you?"

in two dead languages. Lauer has always known that the make-or-break audience for "The Passion" is the active Christian community, which could effectively kill the film if it discerned even a hint of blasphemy. As Paula Fredriksen has written in *The New Republic*, "evangelical Christians, in my experience, know their Scriptures very, very well."

For that reason, Lauer began to cultivate Christian groups almost from the start. I first heard about "The Passion" from Billy Graham's public-relations man in Dallas, A. Larry Ross, who had seen the film in late May at the Icon offices. The evangelical reaction to the movie was almost uniformly enthusiastic. When the attacks on the film began, Icon was able to turn its marketing strategy into an effective counter-offensive. This summer, Lauer scheduled a series of screenings and appearances by Gibson before Christian groups and conservative columnists, who praised the film to their congregations and readers. "I can say 'The Passion' is the most beautiful, profound, accurate, disturbing, realistic, and bloody depiction of this well-known story that has ever been filmed," the nationally syndicated columnist Cal Thomas wrote in August. "Its message is not just for Christians, but for everyone. I doubt a better film about Jesus could be made." David Horowitz wrote in his Web log that "it is an awesome artifact, an overpowering work." Michael Medved said in a television appearance, "It is by a very large margin of advantage the most effective cinematic adaptation of a Biblical story I have ever seen."

I accompanied Gibson on several such appearances, and at each he was received with an enthusiasm that seemed to reach beyond the movie itself, to a deeply felt disaffection from the secular world; now an icon of that world was on their side. In Anaheim, Gibson showed a trailer of the film to a convention of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship, and received a standing ovation. Afterward, the daughter of the organization's president laid hands on Gibson and asked Jesus to "bind Satan, bind the press, we ask you, Lord."

That same evening, Gibson made another appearance—the only one that seemed to make him nervous. It was a screening for three hundred and fifty Jesuits, who had gathered in an auditorium at Loyola Marymount University. After the film, Gibson took to the stage, and, shuffling his feet and staring at the ground, asked the priests if they had any questions. Gibson later explained the reason for his and Lauer's anxiety: "If anyone's gonna kill you, it's those guys, right? We're Catholics, right? We're scared of the Jesuits. Every good Catholic is." He needn't have been. Some of the Jesuits had eschatological concerns (Couldn't there be more of the risen Christ?), and one elderly priest wondered whether the subtitles might be made larger. The closest that anyone came to suggesting political correctness was when one priest toward the front urged that the language be more inclusive. "Rather than using 'Jesus, the son of man,' maybe 'Jesus, the son of all'?" The other Jesuits booed him down, and the evening ended with another standing ovation.

The next morning, Robyn Gibson asked her husband not to read the newspaper until he had had his coffee. The Los Angeles *Times* had published a column, by Tim Rutten, that likened Gibson to "an unwholesomely willful child playing with matches. The immediate temptation may be to let the little brat learn the lesson that burnt fingers will teach." Gibson was still fuming when he reached his Icon office, where another special screening was scheduled, this one for the television evangelist Dr. Robert Schuller. The preacher's entourage ar-

SEPTEMBER POEM

Now can I say?
On that blackest day,

When I learned of
The uncountable, the hellbent obscenity,

I felt, with shame, a seed in me,
Powerful and inarticulate:

I wanted to be pregnant.
Women in the street flowing toward

Home, dazed with grief, and my daze
Admixed with jealous awe, I wondered

If they were,
Or wished for it, too,

To be full, to be forming,
To be giving our blood's food

To the yet to be.
To feel the warp of morning's

Hormonal chucking, the stutter kiss
Of first movement. At first,

The idea of sex a further horror:
To take pleasure in a collision

Of bodies was vile, self-centered, too lush.
But the pushy, ennobling pulse

Of the ordinary won't halt
For good taste. Or knows nothing of tragedy.

Thus. Today I have a boy
A week old. Blessed surplus:

A third child.
Have you heard mothers,

Matter of fact, call the third
The insurance policy?

That wasn't why.
And not because when so many people

Die we want, crudely pining,
To replace them with more people.

But for the wild, heaven-grazing
Pleasure and pain of the arrival.

The small head crushed and melony
After a journey

Out. Sheer cliff
Of the first day, flat in bed, gut-empty,

Ringed by memories and sharp cries.
Sharp bliss in proximity to the roundness,

The globe already a-spin, particular,
Of a whole new life.

Which might in any case
End in towering sorrow.

—*Deborah Garrison*

rived and took their places in the screening room, without Schuller, who had apparently got lost inside the building's corridors. While waiting for him, Gibson talked about the column, and observed, to general agreement, that "the L.A. *Times*, it's an anti-Christian publication, as is the New York *Times*."

A moment later, Schuller walked in, with a book in his hand, which he presented to Gibson. It was a polemic called "Journalistic Fraud: How the New York Times Distorts the News and Why It Can No Longer Be Trusted," by Bob Kohn.

"It hits the stores this week, and we expect it to be on the best-seller list," Schuller said. "And the author is very prominent, Bob Kohn, very wealthy . . . and Jewish."

"Hey! That's a great gift!" Gibson said, brightening. "Thank you."

After the film, Schuller said that he had watched carefully for "who the Christ-killers were, and it was really the Romans." Mrs. Schuller wiped tears from her eyes, and said to Gibson, "You have a powerful masterpiece here."

Before leaving, Schuller faced Gibson and, his broadcaster's voice assuming the tone of prayer, pronounced his judgment on the film. "It's not your dream, this is God's dream," he said. "He gave it to you, because He knew you wouldn't throw it away. Trust Him."

The Christian groups, however, can't distribute the film, and Gibson has twenty-five million dollars of his own money at stake. Twentieth Century Fox has already said that it does not plan to take on "The Passion." But word of mouth is everything in Hollywood, and Icon's strategy of selectively previewing the movie has played directly into the film community's native wish to be on the inside. Lauer has let it be known that he is planning several screenings over the coming months for selected people in the industry, a tactic that has only heightened interest in the film. Jeff Berg, the chairman and C.E.O. of International Creative Management, which represents Gibson and handles his distribution deals, is talking to several studios about a possible deal, among them Paramount, Warners, and Harvey Weinstein's Miramax. He has told them that he will show the film only to those studios which agree, in advance, to Icon's terms—an effort to weed out the merely curious.

"Inadvertently," Gibson says, "all the problems and the conflicts and stuff—this is some of the best marketing and publicity I have ever seen."

In his 1997 film "Conspiracy Theory," Gibson played a paranoid New York taxi-driver who sees in everything around him the malign work of a dark, invisible hand. In the film's opening scene, Gibson's character is shown in a montage of taxi rides, in which he reveals his crazy notions to a series of bemused fares. "I mean, George Bush knew what he was saying when he said, 'New World Order,' " Gibson tells one rider. "Remember those three little words? 'New World Order'? Well, he was a thirty-third-degree Mason, you know." To a pair of nuns riding in the back seat, Gibson declares, "Hey, don't get me wrong, Sister, I'm sure your heart's in the right place, O.K.? But, you know, somebody's got to lift the scab, the festering scab, that is the Vatican." The scene is played as screwball comedy, and during the movie Gibson's character comes to believe something even loonier—that the government is trying to kill him, because he knows too much. The movie's twist, revealed at the end, is that Gibson's character is right—he's a former government assassin who had been part of a mind-control experiment. His conspiracy theories were true. In the movies, the technique is called "the slow reveal."

It has been an inside joke among some of Gibson's pals that the opening scene of "Conspiracy Theory" wasn't scripted, that Gibson just played it off the top of his head, employing dialogue reflecting his own views. By the end of my visit with Gibson, I realized that they weren't entirely kidding.

After the screening with Schuller, Gibson was scheduled to fly to Washington for an appearance at a gathering of the Knights of Columbus, the Catholic charity organization, and thence to more of Lauer's marketing stops. That evening, I joined Gibson for the trip East, along with Lauer and Danny Rafic, an Israeli film editor who is working on "The Passion."

When Gibson was in Rome shooting the film, he told an Italian interviewer that he had felt moved by God's spirit to undertake the project. I asked him what he'd meant by that. How did he know that God wanted him to make "The Passion"?

"There are signals," he said. "You get signals. Signs. 'Signal graces,' they're called. It's like traffic lights. It's as clear as a traffic light. Bing! I mean, it just grabs you and you know you have to listen to that and you have to follow it. Like last night, you know?"

He reminded me of an incident that had occurred the night before, as we were driving to Anaheim. Gibson was behind the wheel of his silver Lexus, negotiating the nightmarish traffic on the Santa Ana Freeway, when a car pulled in front of him and immediately hit the brakes. Gibson had seemed ready to unleash some invective, when he stopped and stared at the offending car's license plate. "Look! Look at what it says!" The car's license-plate holder bore the inscription "Psalm 91." Gibson said that on that very morning, after he'd been vexed by the Los Angeles *Times* column, one of his associates had urged him to read the ninety-first Psalm, and that he'd been moved to tears by it. ("A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. . . . For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.")

"It was weird," Gibson said. "Those are signals, alright?"

He then told me about something that had happened when he was building his church. He had wanted to fill the place with antique candlesticks and such, and he'd had a hard time finding them. He was in Philadelphia shooting a picture, and someone told him about a man who had a storehouse of old church items. Gibson called the man, and asked if he was willing to sell any of the stuff. The man, considering his celebrity customer, was reluctant. "Not if you're gonna put it in a disco, or fornicate on it," he said. Gibson talked to him for a while, and convinced him of the purity of his intent. They did business, and just before Gibson left the man pulled something out, and offered it to Gibson as a gift. It was a small, faded piece of cloth. "What is it?" he asked. The man told him that he had a special devotion to a nineteenth-century Augustinian nun, Anne Catherine Emmerich, and that the cloth was a piece of her habit.

As it happened, Emmerich had special meaning to Gibson as well. Emmerich was an impoverished Westphalian farm girl who had visions at an early age. She was so pious that when she joined a convent, at the age of twenty-eight, she was considered odd even there. Eventually, she began to experience ecstasies and develop stigmata. Her experiences attracted Church inquiries, state suspicions, and popular curiosity, and ultimately the attention of the poet Clemens Brentano, one of the founders of the German Romantic movement. Brentano made his way to Emmerich, who was ailing, and who told him that she had been awaiting his arrival. He wrote down her visions, including detailed narratives from Christ's Passion, and published them after her death, in 1824, in a book called "The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Six weeks after she died, Emmerich's body was disinterred, and was said to show no decay. In Catholic theology, ecstasies are considered a rare gift from God, and Emmerich is proceeding toward beatification.

When Gibson returned to his faith, he acquired, from a nunnery that had closed down, a library of hundreds of books, many of them quite old. He says that when he was researching "The Passion" one evening he reached up for a book, and Brentano's volume tumbled out

"Not to toot my own horn, but I was doing time for securities fraud when you were still in business school."

of the shelf into his hands. He sat down to read it, and was flabbergasted by the vivid imagery of Emmerich's visions. "Amazing images," he said. "She supplied me with stuff I never would have thought of." The one image that is most noticeable in "The Passion" is a scene after Jesus' scourging, when a grief-stricken Mary gets down on her knees to mop up his blood.

I reminded Gibson, who carries the Emmerich relic in his pocket, that some of his critics have pointed out that Emmerich's depiction of Jews is inflammatory, thereby imputing anti-Semitism to Gibson's film. "Why are they calling her a Nazi?" Gibson asked. "Because modern secular Judaism wants to blame the Holocaust on the Catholic Church. And it's a lie. And it's revisionism. And they've been working on that one for a while."

We talked of the nature of Gibson's faith, and I asked him about an aspect of Vatican II which has not been much discussed in the debate over his film. One of the council's most significant acts was its Decree on Ecumenism, which declared that all Christians, even those outside the Catholic Church, "have the right to be called Christian; the children of the Catholic Church accept them as brothers." This effectively overturned the Catholic notion that the only true course to salvation was through the Catholic Church.

I told Gibson that I am a Protestant, and asked whether his pre-Vatican II world view disqualified me from eternal salvation. He paused. "There is no salvation for those outside the Church," he said. "I believe it." He explained, "Put it this way. My wife is a saint. She's a much better person than I am. Honestly. She's, like, Episcopalian, Church of England. She prays, she believes in God, she knows Jesus, she believes in that stuff. And it's just not fair if she doesn't make it, she's better than I am. But that is a pronouncement from the chair. I go with it."

With that, Gibson excused himself, and headed toward the galley of the plane, where an attendant had laid out supper. I glanced up at the video monitor at the front of the cabin, showing our progress on the journey to Washington. We were forty-five thousand feet over the high plains of Colorado, heading toward Kansas, according to the monitor, which displayed the name of the town shimmering faintly below us. It was a place called Last Chance.

The next morning, Gibson was rousingly received at the Washington Hilton ballroom by the Knights of Columbus. One of the group's leaders, in introducing Gibson, reminded the big crowd that the Knights had been called to battle before on such issues as abortion and prayer in school. "If there's going to be a fight, maybe we should not duck it," he said. "Maybe we should make sure that Mel Gibson gets a fair hearing in this."

After the event, I thanked Gibson, and bade him farewell. When I arrived home in New York, I called Abraham Foxman, of the A.D.L. By then, Foxman's associate Eugene Korn had managed to see a screening of "The Passion," at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. Afterward, the A.D.L. had issued another statement warning of its grave concern that the film "could fuel hatred, bigotry, and anti-Semitism."

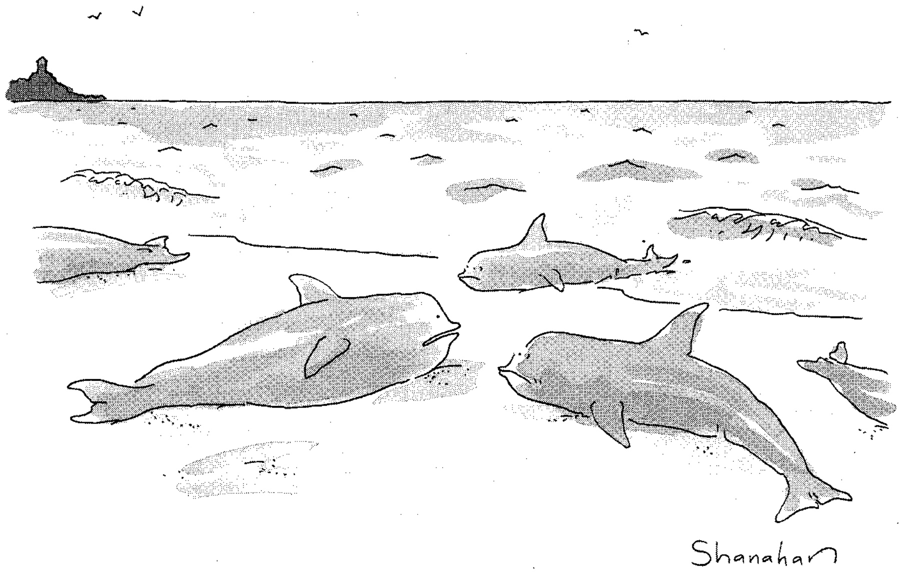
I asked Foxman if he believed that Gibson was an anti-Semite. "Per se, I don't think that Mel Gibson is anti-Semitic," Foxman said. "I think that he is insensitive."

But what of "The Passion" itself, I asked. Is the film anti-Semitic? "The film, per se, is not anti-Semitic," Foxman said. The problem, he added, was that, as with any literal reading of the New Testament, its message of love could be twisted into something hateful. "The film can fuel, trigger, stimulate, induce, rationalize, legitimize anti-Semitism," Foxman said.

"You know, the Gospels, if taken literally, can be very damaging, in the same way if you take the Old Testament literally," Foxman went on. "It says, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' Now, has the Jewish state, or have Jews, practiced the Old Testament by taking an eye for an eye? No. So a literal reading of almost anything can lead to all kinds of things."

Speaking with Foxman made me realize just what it was that Gibson had done in making "The Passion." Gibson had said from the start that he was going to make a movie taken straight from the Gospels. Foxman was saying that, for better or worse, Gibson had done just that. In focussing on Gibson's Traditionalist Catholicism, some of his critics have created the expectation that "The Passion" is a medieval Passion play depicting Jews in horns drinking Christian blood. It is not that. Nor is it the attenuated dramatization that the Catholic scholars might have wished for. Gibson's "Passion" is a literalist rendering of the Gospels' account of Jesus' Passion, which makes it the ultimate Traditionalist expression.

That fact will eventually become evident, no doubt. By then, "The Passion" may well be out of the theatres and playing on cable. That is the art of the slow reveal. ♦



"Now I remember why I hate the beach."

PROFILES

URBAN WARRIORS

Daniel and Nina Libeskind thought they had figured out how to get a building built. Then they came to New York.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

Daniel Libeskind likes to work with crystalline shapes. Before he was selected as the master planner of Ground Zero in Manhattan, he designed an addition to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London that looks like a gargantuan pile of rock candy. His new wing for the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto seems to be composed of enormous ice cubes. The principal architectural element of his proposal for the World Trade Center site is the Freedom Tower, a quartz-like slice that cuts into the sky and is attached to a bulkier office building. It is a distinctive and authoritative composition. Libeskind did not actually win the right to design the spire, however—or any other building on the site, for that matter—or even to determine precisely where it would be situated, although that was not entirely clear to most members of the public in the giddy weeks right before and after his design was selected, in February. The selection process had been portrayed, for better or for worse, as a kind of sporting event, and Libeskind was seen to have triumphed in the playoffs and then won the championship. It would have been more accurate to say that he had got past a qualifying round.

The competition for the World Trade Center site design was set in motion by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation in the fall of 2002, when seven teams of prominent architects were asked to come up with ideas about such things as where to put a memorial, what to do with the skyline, and how to connect downtown with the rest of the city. Most of the architects, including Libeskind, responded with elaborate plans—not only urban layouts but designs for actual buildings. The designs by the celebrity architects were well publicized, and Larry Silverstein, the real-estate developer who leased the original Trade Center towers from the Port Authority, stayed mainly on the sidelines, although at one point he wrote to the L.M.D.C. denouncing all the proposals as unsuitable for his needs.

Silverstein claims to have the right to rebuild the Trade Center. There had been talk of buying him out, or even of condemning the property, but no one—not the Port Authority or Governor Pataki, who theoretically could have—followed up on the idea. Silverstein is the beneficiary of several billion dollars in insurance money that will likely provide most of the funds, at least initially, for construction on the site. When Libeskind's design was chosen, Silverstein said he thought that it was an excellent site plan, but he didn't say much about the Freedom Tower. He intended to do business the way he always had, and he wanted his own architect, David Childs of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, to design the tower. He also wanted to move it closer to the spot where a new transportation hub will be built. Childs, unlike Libeskind, is an experienced designer of tall buildings, including the AOL Time Warner complex at Columbus Circle, and he has been playing with designs for a tower on the World Trade Center site since late in 2001, long before Libeskind was in the picture.

Early this summer, Silverstein's money and chutzpah seemed to be getting him what he wanted, but Libeskind, who was born in Poland and grew up in the Bronx, turned out to know more than a little about street fighting in New York. He had hired a lawyer, Edward Hayes, who is a close friend of Governor Pataki, and Hayes argued that the public expected his client to build everything he had envisioned—that his plans had been presented as a package. Libeskind made it clear that he was prepared to walk off the project, which would have embarrassed both the L.M.D.C. and Pataki, whose support was crucial to Libeskind's selection, and who has pledged to start construction on the tower by next year, when the Republicans come to town for their Presidential Convention. He made the pledge in April, standing in front of a six-foot-tall rendering of Libeskind's Freedom Tower.

Pataki urged Kevin Rampe, the president of the L.M.D.C., to force Libeskind and Childs to sort things out, and Rampe called a meeting at L.M.D.C. headquarters at One Liberty Plaza on July 15th. Libeskind came with Edward Hayes and several staff members. Childs, who said later that he hadn't been told about the draconian aspect of the meeting, brought one of his architectural partners and Janno Lieber, Larry Silverstein's executive in charge of the World Trade Center site. The architects and their entourages sat in separate conference rooms at opposite ends of the twentieth floor, and Rampe and Matthew Higgins, the chief operating officer of the L.M.D.C., shuttled between the two camps. After five hours of this, nobody had budged from his original position.

"The Libeskinds are afraid of being chewed up by the Skidmore, Owings & Merrill machine," Rampe told Childs. "Well, I'm afraid of being chewed up by the Libeskind machine," Childs replied.

Sometime after nine in the evening, Higgins sent out for pizza, and not long after that Rampe suggested that it might be helpful if Libeskind and Childs discussed things face to face, away from everyone else. The two men went into a third room. Childs was firm. He had a design for a tower and he didn't want Libeskind's design to be the starting point of any collaboration. "Only if this is a blank slate can I work with you," he said.

"This is not a tabula rasa," Libeskind replied. "The Freedom Tower is an image, a basis."

"I have my own image," Childs said. "I appreciate and respect what you do, but it is not what I do."

Libeskind began to sketch his design on a piece of paper. "I have an idea how we can develop it," he insisted, but Childs continued to demur. Libeskind said that he would agree to a fifty-fifty sharing of authority. Childs said that was impossible: "Someone has to be the writer of the Constitution."

Childs told me later that he felt that Libeskind was wedded to a sculptural image, and that he found his asymmetrical scheme illogical. "He is shaping a clay block and sticking a sword on one side of it," Childs said.

"It was gruelling," Libeskind recalled. "It felt like the Grand Inquisitor scene in 'The Brothers Karamazov.' "

It is hard to say which architect wore the other down, but shortly before eleven o'clock they came out of the room and announced that they had agreed that while Childs's firm would be the official architect of the Freedom Tower, Libeskind would "meaningfully collaborate"

The Libeskinds work on the plans for Ground Zero together. He designs, she manages. Photograph by Mary Ellen Mark.

on the design, and that it would be presented as a joint creation.

Libeskind likes to talk about how architecture is the art of compromise. It took the better part of a decade to get his most famous building, the Jewish Museum in Berlin, built, but after years of struggle with a hostile city government it was erected pretty much as Libeskind had designed it: a zigzag form clad in zinc. He has been waiting nearly as long to see the start of construction on the addition to the V. & A. in London. He and David Childs have been meeting regularly since their negotiations in July, but they have not agreed on a working design, and it is impossible to say whether the Freedom Tower will end up looking like Libeskind's version, or Childs's, or something entirely new. In any case, Libeskind, who has never before designed a skyscraper, is, for the time being, in a position to have a great deal of influence over what will be the tallest building in the world.

Most people who have come to know Libeskind in New York refer to him as "they," meaning him and his wife, Nina, who is his business partner, office manager, strategist, negotiator, publicist, and nearly constant companion. They are both slight, and both have short, closely cropped gray hair and wear glasses. Nina is present at almost every meeting her husband attends, and when he isn't there she represents their firm, Studio Daniel Libeskind. After they won the competition in February, Nina, who worked as a labor arbitrator in Canada in the late seventies, negotiated contracts worth nearly six million dollars from the L.M.D.C. and the Port Authority, for work on the master plan, the design guidelines, and the memorial areas of Ground Zero.

The Libeskinds had been living in Berlin since 1989, when preliminary work on the Jewish Museum began. Until early this summer, when they got an apartment in New York, they stayed at the Four Seasons Hotel on Fifty-seventh Street when they were in the city. Each day started with a fax from Nina's assistant in Berlin that laid out that day's schedule of meetings. "Nina has a great technique," Daniel said to me. "I don't know my schedule in advance—if I knew what I had to do each day I couldn't do it." Nina Libeskind sees her job as keeping the pressures of the world away from her husband so that he is free to think and draw. "Daniel can spend days, literally days, thinking about doorknobs," Nina says. Nevertheless, she is the more private of the two.

Daniel Libeskind is probably more at ease in public than any architect since Philip Johnson. During a three-day period this spring, I heard him speak one morning at a press conference at the Second Avenue Deli announcing a benefit for the Folksbiene Yiddish Theatre; at a cocktail party that night on Central Park West, where he was introduced as the most famous alumnus of Camp Hemshekh, a summer camp established by Holocaust survivors for their children (he met Nina there in 1966); at the Bronx High School of Science the next morning, where he was honored as a distinguished alumnus; and the following day in San Diego, where four thousand architects attending the annual convention of the American Institute of Architects showed up at eight o'clock in the morning to hear him present his plan for Ground Zero. He made two other speeches that week that I missed.

Libeskind brings up the subject of architecture only obliquely in many of his speeches, and sometimes not at all. When he spoke to a group gathered at the home of David and Ruth Levine, old friends of his who are supporters of a project to create a new Yiddish theatre in New York, he talked only about Yiddish. "Yiddish is the language that gave me an identity, a connection with the six million murdered Jews," Libeskind said. "Yiddish culture has to be rooted in this city, because the renaissance of Yiddish culture is part of the resurgence, the revival, of New York. New York is an optimistic city, the capital of emotions, of intellect."

The Libeskinds—he is always in black with, occasionally, a red scarf, she in gray—look as if they belonged in an avant-garde art gallery in Berlin, but when Daniel Libeskind opens his mouth what comes out is more along the lines of Middle American sentiment, delivered with a cultivated Eastern European accent. (He didn't start speaking English until he was thirteen.) Libeskind began his early-morning presentation to the architects in San Diego by talking about visiting his old high school in the Bronx the day before. "As I went up the Grand Concourse past the Amalgamated Houses, I thought, That is what it is all about, the civic process, the art of cities," he said. "A student asked me what I did to prepare for the World Trade Center competition, and I said there are three things that I did that are special. I took out the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and reread them so I could get back to what America is about, and I read Walt Whitman, the poet of working-class New York, and I reread 'The Two Churches,' a short story by Melville. And of course I went to the site—people perishing in their everyday life. It is not about the ego of the architect. It is about people's hopes." Libeskind told the story of how he first saw the Statue of Liberty as he was arriving by boat as a thirteen-year-old immigrant, and he ended his presentation by showing the architects a slide of the 1,776-foot-tall Freedom Tower as it would look from the water, juxtaposed with the Statue of Liberty.

There is a lack of connection between Libeskind's speeches and his work, as if he had decided that the best way to sell avant-garde architecture was to be so gemütlich that no one could be put off by him. "He's done amazing things," Robert A. M. Stern, the dean of the Yale School of Architecture, said to me. "He's propelled himself—or, rather, Nina and he have propelled themselves—onto the center stage of world architecture. But Daniel is a preacher, and preachers always make me slightly nervous." For an architect who loves to talk, Libeskind says very little about his buildings that could be considered analytical. He presents his work almost as if it were someone else's that he had just seen for the first time and found dazzling.

Libeskind gives his projects simple names: the new Danish Jewish Museum in Copenhagen is the Mitzvah; a proposal for the Corcoran Gallery in Washington (an entry in a competition for an addition to the museum which Libeskind eventually lost to Frank Gehry) is the Kaleidoscope; and a new building for the Denver Art Museum, his biggest project in the United States until he won the Ground Zero competition, is called the Eye and the Wing. The Ground Zero project, Memory Foundations, has a Wedge of Light and a Park of Heroes. Libeskind designs buildings that feature sharp angles, glass ceilings, and slanted walls, and then he describes them as if they were the inevitable result of his patriotic and optimistic instincts, and as down-home as Colonial Williamsburg.

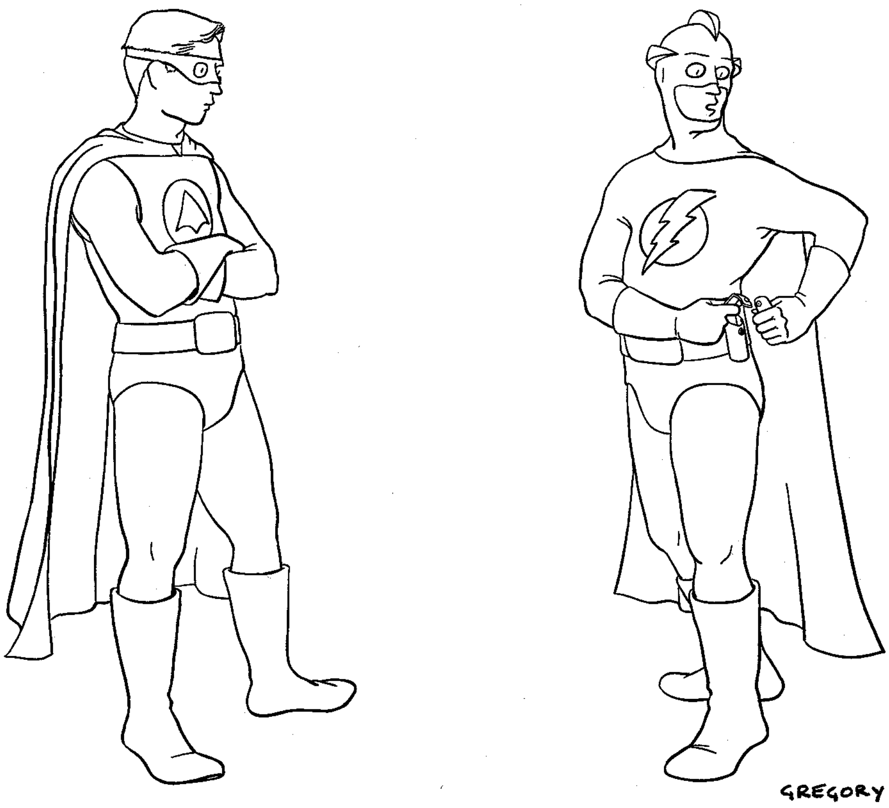
He tailors his lines to his audience. "From the minute I saw the mountains and the light I fell in love with Denver," he said last spring to a crowd assembled for a dedication ceremony at the site of the new building for the Denver Art Museum. "It was not just the light of nature—it was the light in people's eyes. It is the beauty of the people here, the beauty of their aspirations. Architecture is a civic art, and a museum is not just a container to be filled with treasures; it is a place where people are brought to wonder about the spaces of their own futures. We are creating a complex that will glow, not only with the light of the mountains but with the spiritual." The audience, which had not heard him describe the skyline of New York in similar terms, was delighted.

Daniel Libeskind did not set out to be an architect. His first passion was music, which he began studying in 1953, when he was seven, in Lodz, Poland. "I started with the accordion because my parents didn't want people to see a Jew getting a piano," Libeskind said to me. "They told me they would bring me a piano in a suitcase, and it was the accordion"—which his father could bring in unnoticed through the courtyard of their apartment building. In 1957, the family emigrated to Israel, where Daniel won a music competition, and Isaac Stern, who was one of the judges, urged him to switch from the accordion to the piano, which he did. The family did not last long in Israel. "My mother truly hated it—she hated the idea that you had to conform to a collective idea," Libeskind said. "And in 1957 my father was an old man. He was forty-seven, and it was a country of young people." So two years later the family moved again, this time to the Bronx, where Daniel, his sister Annette, and his parents lived in a one-bedroom apartment in the Amalgamated Houses. His father got a job in a printing shop on Stone Street in lower Manhattan, a few blocks from what would become Ground Zero. Libeskind continued to play the piano, but his interest in music waned. "Music was not about abstract, intellectual thought—it was about playing," he said to me. "I didn't find it interesting enough. I couldn't see spending my life on a stage."

For a while he pursued mathematics, and read Hegel and Spinoza, and somehow he gradually moved toward art and architecture. At the Bronx High School of Science, he designed a nuclear shelter as a science project. "Architecture was considered very lowly at Bronx Science," Libeskind said. "If you were really smart, you did quantum physics. I didn't take it that way, as only doing doors and windows, but I didn't know what architects did. Had I known that most architects were people in white shirts sitting at desks designing details of buildings no one would take responsibility for, then I never would have become an architect. Architecture was once a humanistic pursuit. It is not just functional diagrams of an office or a shopping center."

Libeskind applied to Cooper Union, partly because it was in New York City and tuition-free, and partly because the dean of its architecture school, John Hejduk, had made it a center for the kind of theoretical exploration of architecture that Libeskind was looking for. No one at Cooper worried about shopping centers or where plumbing lines went. Libeskind was accepted, and for a time he continued to live at home, where the only space he had to work was a small, oval Formica-topped table in the kitchen. He would set his T-square on top of the table, and, because of the rounded edge, the lines across his paper came out diagonally. "It was so difficult at that table to do straight lines all across—maybe that's where the angles came from," he said to me.

He was one of Hejduk's prize students, and while he was at Cooper, Richard Meier offered him a job. Libeskind disliked the office routine, and thought that Meier's elegant, pristine buildings were a kind of high-class form of standardization. "I hated how the young architects would copy the Meier formula



"It occurred to me that there's no rule against having mutant telekinetic powers and pepper spray."

from his books,” Libeskind said. After seven days, he quit. “Meier couldn’t believe it,” Nina said. “He was paying Daniel a hundred and twenty-five dollars a week. It was a lot of money.”

The Libeskinds were married in 1969. Nina—whose father, David Lewis, founded a socialist-leaning political party in Canada, and whose brother, Stephen Lewis, became the Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations—immediately assumed the role of organizer, but she faced an uphill battle. “I arranged for a trip to the Caribbean, but Daniel had got a travel scholarship to see the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, and that became our honeymoon,” she said. “Neither of us could drive, so we went with two other students. One was a strict Lutheran, the other a Jehovah’s Witness, and neither of them was what you would call loose and easy. We camped out in sleeping bags in a station wagon. That was when I realized my life would never be normal.”

Daniel was happy studying, teaching, and writing. He had little interest in politics. “I think the sixties passed him by,” the writer and critic Arthur Krystal, who was Libeskind’s closest friend when they were both growing up in the Bronx, told me. He went to the University of Essex, in England, and in 1971 earned a master’s degree in the history and theory of architecture. He taught for a while in London and Toronto and at the University of Kentucky. Then, in 1978, when he was thirty-two, he was offered a job as head of the architecture school at Cranbrook academy in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, an unusual institution in an idyllic setting. It had been headed for years by Eliel Saarinen, and had spawned Charles Eames, among other distinguished figures. The Libeskinds moved to Michigan.

“I remember my mother telling me when she came to Cranbrook that I was the luckiest person in the world and I should stay there until my beard grew down to my knees,” Libeskind said. “Just after she said it, I said to myself, ‘This is such a trap, it’s easy to be a saint in an ivory tower, you have the delusion that this is reality.’ ”

Libeskind didn’t tell his wife that he was increasingly unhappy at Cranbrook, thinking she enjoyed it, and she didn’t tell him that she, too, was miserable. In 1985, when he told her he wanted to quit, she opened a bottle of cognac. They moved to Milan, where Daniel started a kind of alternative architecture school, the Architecture Intermundium, which he hoped would straddle the worlds of practice and the academy. “I wanted to create an alternative to both models, teaching and business practice,” Libeskind said. His work at that time, however, was heavily theoretical, virtually unbuildable, and frequently incomprehensible. Chamberworks: Architectural Meditations on the Themes of Heraclitus, for instance, a project that he produced a couple of years before he left Cranbrook, is intended to explore the connection between music and architecture. It consists of twenty-eight drawings, many of them reminiscent of the work of Kasimir Malevich and Wassily Kandinsky, with an energetic panache that is very much Libeskind’s own. The drawings are breathtaking, but the connection between architecture and music remains obscure (although one drawing looks like a musical score interpreted by Ronald Searle). “Architecture is neither on the inside nor the outside,” Libeskind wrote in the accompanying text. “It is not a given nor a physical fact. It has no history and it does not follow fate.”

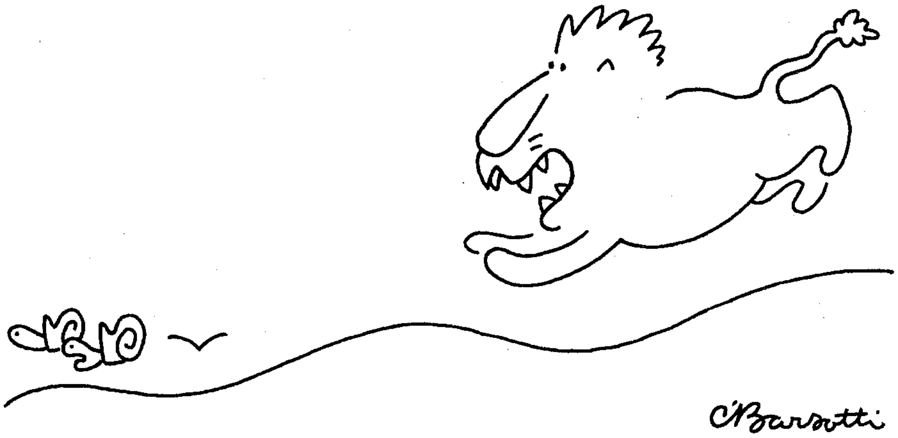
“So, you’re still doing the Western thing.”

Libeskind got a big break in 1987, when a project he designed for a competition for housing in West Berlin won first prize, and a bigger break when, the following year, Philip Johnson put it on display in his “Deconstructivist Architecture” exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. The project was never built, but getting into the MOMA show anointed Libeskind. The housing consisted of space in a structure that looked like a huge bar elevated at an angle, so that at one end it was ten stories above the street and supported on a series of angled legs. Libeskind intended it to be a comment on the Berlin Wall, as if a piece of the wall were flying into the sky, and on the relationship between order and disorder in the city. “This space of nonequilibrium—from which freedom eternally departs and toward which it moves without homecoming—constitutes a place in which architecture comes upon itself as beginning at the end," he wrote, which indicated, among other things, that he was not very good at communicating with anyone who wasn't an architecture student.

It was Nina who changed that. In 1989, Libeskind won another competition, for a museum of Berlin's Jewish history. He had just accepted a position as a senior scholar at the Getty Center in Los Angeles, and the Libeskinds' household possessions were en route to California when he went to Berlin to accept the prize. The Jewish museum had a real chance of getting built, but Nina understood immediately that there was considerable opposition to the project in Berlin, and that Daniel's design, which was only slightly more conventional than his housing project, would be torn to pieces or abandoned altogether while he sat reading books at the Getty. "Libeskind," she said to him, "if you want to build this, we have to stay here." The Libeskinds reversed course and set up shop in Berlin, where they stayed for fourteen years.

For the first time in his life, Libeskind had to have an architectural office that was equipped to build buildings, not just to think about them. Nina organized it, and at that point she became her husband's managing partner. "When Nina entered the office, I had to explain everything to her," Libeskind said to me, recalling the days when he was trying to sell the design for the Jewish museum to people in Berlin. "She said, 'I just see a bunch of lines, explain it to me.' At first, I was very angry. I said she knew no architecture, this wouldn't work. Then I started to think that if she was so intelligent and didn't understand it, I had to draw it and explain it in a way that she would understand. That Nina did not understand architecture was a great advantage. She was not initiated into the secret language, but the public wasn't, either."

Nina's fears about opposition to Daniel's scheme for the Jewish Museum were well grounded. The mayor didn't want to spend money on it, and Berlin's architectural and planning establishment favored the notion that the city should be rebuilt with largely traditional structures. German skittishness about accusations of anti-Semitism meant that public criticism of the project was muted, but it was strong. Nevertheless, Nina's political instincts and Daniel's new mode of communication prevailed. When the museum opened, in 1999, it was one of the most talked-about pieces of architecture in the world, not only because of its unusual, zigzagging shape and narrow windows, which looked like slashes across the bright zinc façade, or its interior, which contained, among other elements, a tall, empty concrete shaft called the Holocaust Tower and a long, inaccessible void that cut through the length of the building and was crossed by catwalks. It was distinctive also because for the first two years after it opened, the museum had nothing on its walls: it was an exhibition of itself. Libeskind had not been commissioned to design a Holocaust memorial, but he had produced a de-facto one, and, in his new, help-everyone-understand mode, he made each architectural gesture a metaphor. He called the central void "the embodiment of absence," a reminder of the emptiness the slaughter of millions of Jews had left in German culture; the garden, with its rows of twenty-foot-high concrete columns topped by vegetation, was the Garden of Exile and Emigration, honoring German Jews who fled during the Nazi years. He filled forty-eight of the columns with dirt from Berlin and one with earth from Jerusalem. From the air, the building looks something like a Star of David broken apart.



"Times must really be tough!"

The museum has its share of architectural conceits—for example, the forty-eight columns filled with German dirt represent 1948, the year Israel was founded—but it has a purely architectural force that transcends Libeskind's gimmicks. The disquieting spaces are dignified and powerful, and when you stand in them you do not feel manipulated by a metaphor. You feel that you are in a work of architecture that is brooding and, at its best, profound. Still, the building is hardly a complete success as museums go, despite the enormous crowds it continues to attract. Most people think it worked best when there was nothing in it. The intense, angular spaces are distracting, and it's hard to concentrate on the artifacts they house.

Libeskind's design for the Denver Art Museum looks like a series of metal shards, and while it is carefully composed, it seems to symbolize chaos, not order. It looks like an astonishingly beautiful explosion. In some of the sections, the walls are canted outward, so that they loom over passersby like huge prows. The building is actually an addition to the museum, which is a kind of modernist version of a medieval fortress by the Italian architect Gio Ponti. It would have been nearly impossible to add to Ponti's eccentric work by normal standards of compatibility, so Libeskind made the only reasonable decision, which was to leave it alone and put something completely different beside it.

There are almost no walls at a ninety-degree angle in the new building, and in several of the galleries the walls converge

NEW DUNCE CAPS
AT GRADE LEVEL READER
FORGET THE IVY LEAGUE, PAL
TOTALLY AVERAGE

so that the spaces end in a point. Last spring, when I was there, Daniel Kohl, the museum's chief exhibition designer, had set up a series of large white cardboard models of the galleries, into which he was placing postage-stamp-size replicas of pictures from the museum's collection and miniatures of sculptures, like furniture in a doll house. "Daniel didn't give us sloped walls—he gave us incredible spaces," Kohl said to me, pointing to a model of a gallery. "Where in the world would you get a space like that? Every one of these lines has rational rigor behind it—it's not just a lot of crazy lines moving through space." Kohl is in charge of designing temporary partitions that will hold much of the art, zigzagging walls inside the zigzagging space. "I'm so enamored of the architecture and the geometry that I want what we do to celebrate it, not deny what Daniel has done," he said. Still, he struggles with how Libeskind-like he should make his partitions. "Daniel and I have talked about this—is this a duet? Am I doing harmony to his melody? He says it's like jazz and I'm improvising off his melody line." Libeskind walked in just then. He looked at a wall Kohl had designed for the fourth floor, the top of which was slightly canted in response to Libeskind's raked ceiling. "I think it's wonderful what you've done—it's so subtle, it has had a great impact," Libeskind said. "I see in what Dan has done a true generosity." Then he was gone, whisked away to have lunch with a potential donor.

Later that day, I joined Libeskind and Kohl—along with Lewis Sharp, the museum director, and Brit Probst, the Denver architect who is serving as Libeskind's associate on the project—on a visit to the construction site, where Libeskind was to make a final decision about what kind of titanium to use for the façade. Two ten-foot-long sample panels of metal, one with a shiny finish and the other with a duller, matte finish, had been propped up on the ground so that the architect could see how the intense Denver sunlight fell on them at the exact spot where the building would rise. Libeskind went immediately to the sample with the matte finish. "The matte one is very mysterious, almost de-materialized," Libeskind said. "It doesn't look as metallic somehow—it's more subtle, precious like jewelry."

He stepped back and tried to view it from different angles. Then he realized that the panels had been set up perpendicular to the ground, and that his building has very few perpendicular walls. "Is there any way to tip it?" he asked. Probst and Kohl each grabbed an end of the panel, which weighed nearly three hundred pounds, and they leaned it forward. Libeskind watched the color of the panel change as the light hit the metal surface less directly, and for a moment he said nothing. "It's incredible, it's lighter, even better this way," he said. "It has a glow, a golden color. It is the best material in the world, like gold."

Libeskind hesitated a moment before making a final decision, and he looked at the shinier sample. "Is Bilbao reflective or not?" he asked. Libeskind has enormous admiration for Frank Gehry, who has been important to him as a mentor, but he doesn't like anyone to think that his work is too similar to Gehry's. He thought about the shiny finish for a minute, and said he felt that the angular shape of the Denver museum was distinct enough from Gehry's curving, expressionistic Guggenheim in Bilbao, and in any event he planned to set his titanium panels close together to create a surface that would appear almost seamless—entirely different from Gehry's surface at Bilbao, which, Libeskind said, "you read as tiles, or scales." Then he chose the matte finish.

The decision made, Libeskind took a break to walk through the museum's big spring exhibition of the work of Pierre Bonnard, where he stared at one of the paintings so closely that he was ordered by a guard to step back or he would set off an alarm. On the way out, he and I strolled through some of the other galleries in the old building. "It is kind of retro, these boring galleries," he said to me. "They say they are for the art, but, after room after room of it, you want something different." Then Libeskind went to the museum's lobby, where Lewis Sharp was hosting a cocktail party for major donors. Sharp participated in the search process that chose Libeskind from a short list of major architects that included Arata Isozaki and Thom Mayne, and when he introduced Libeskind he explained why he wanted to create a cutting-edge building. "We've always felt a little frustrated at the Denver Art Museum," he said. "Our collections are of world quality, but people come here to go to the mountains and go skiing. Anyone who has any interest in the arts and architecture is now going to come to Denver and see this incredible new building." Sharp referred to Libeskind as his "ideal collaborator."

Libeskind spoke off the cuff for several minutes. His goal in designing the museum, he said, was "to create an ambience, an atmosphere, where art can rise to its best state. It's not just a beautiful box with treasures—a building has to be memorable." Instinctively dropping in a reference to the museum's current show, he used Bonnard's work as an analogy for the kind of building he had in mind, a building that is much more than merely functional. "Bonnard painted on a piece of canvas, but we don't see that, or the wood frame," Libeskind said. "We see the art."

That evening, Sharp hosted a small dinner for the Libeskinds at Tamayo, a Mexican restaurant in the restored old buildings of Denver's Lower Downtown. (Nina joked that she would rather watch the women's national basketball championship on television in their hotel room. She is a passionate sports fan, and says she would have become a sportscaster if women of her generation could have done that.) Libeskind tried a margarita—he usually drinks wine—and after a few pleasantries about how well things were progressing in Denver, the conversation turned to a competition to design the expansion of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art a couple of years earlier, which Libeskind had lost to Rem Koolhaas. "We never had a chance," Nina said, and she named a powerful Los Angeles cultural figure who visited the Libeskind office in Berlin during the museum's search, and with whom Daniel, who seems able to get along with anybody, did not get along. Koolhaas's scheme, which called for the destruction of most of the older buildings in the museum complex, had recently been abandoned owing to its high cost, and the Libeskinds were not shedding tears for it. "The idea that you have to destroy in order to create did not appeal to me," Daniel said.

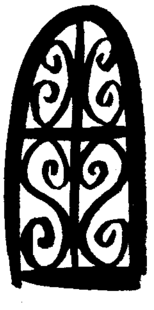
The rest of the evening was devoted mainly to a discussion of the difficulties the Libeskinds were having in finding a place to live in New York. Daniel wanted to be downtown, believing that it would be appropriate for them to live near Ground Zero, and Nina thought the Upper West Side might be easier for their fourteen-year-old daughter, Rachel. The Libeskinds also have two adult sons: Lev, who is twenty-five and was about to start graduate work at the New York University Institute of Fine Arts until a few weeks ago, when he decided to pursue some writing projects and work in the Libeskind studio instead; and Noam, who is twenty-three and studying cosmology at the University of Durham, in England. Daniel fretted that the West Side felt too bourgeois; he thought that a loft was more their style. Nina allowed that a bit of bourgeois living might do her some good, but she worried that they would be unable to afford anything big enough to suit their needs. She is the only one of the couple who thinks about money. Daniel once told me that he overheard her having a long discussion about the economics of running a business and, intrigued, asked her what business she was describing. "It's yours, Libeskind," she told him. (A couple of weeks after their trip to Denver, they settled on a loft on Hudson Street, just north of the World Trade Center site. Then, fearful that designing it would consume too much of Daniel's time, they did an almost unheard-of thing for an architect. They hired another architect—Alexander Gorlin, who lives in the building himself—to work with them to pull the place together.)

The next morning, I rode with Daniel and Nina from their hotel across downtown Denver to the art museum. He was holding a sketch for a portion of the Ground Zero design that had been faxed from his office in London. "Nina, I need to talk to Michael about the drawing," he said. Nina picked up her cell phone and called one of their employees, who was in Switzerland. "The opera house on Greenwich Street looks like an office building," Libeskind said into Nina's phone. "We don't want this to look just like a box in shimmering shadows. It looks like a cartoon, a cliché." He shuffled the pages and picked up another drawing. "But the Park of Heroes drawing is exactly right." Libeskind clicked off, and turned to me. "This is a drawing that is being produced in London by a person in Switzerland for a project in New York, that has been faxed to me in Denver. What an amazing world this is."

For several years after the Jewish Museum project got under way in Berlin, most of Studio Daniel Libeskind's commissions were for other museums: a small museum of the work of the artist Felix Nussbaum in Osnabrück, Germany; the Imperial War Museum in Manchester, England, which opened last year; the Jewish Museum in San Francisco; the Danish Jewish Museum; and the addition to the Royal Ontario Museum, which, like the Victoria and Albert addition, juxtaposes crystalline glass forms against an ornate old building. (Unlike the Victoria and Albert, the Royal Ontario project is about to go into construction.) Lately, however, the Libeskind office has begun to attract other kinds of work. The firm has commissions to design a three-hundred-million-dollar hotel, retail, and convention complex outside Bern, Switzerland, a media center for the City University of Hong Kong, and an office building in Seoul. These are projects that require something different from the Libeskindesque spaces that many museum directors believe attract visitors.

Being sought after to design all kinds of buildings is a new experience for Libeskind, which may be why he tends to accept much of what comes his way. Frank Gehry says that he has warned Libeskind about being a celebrity architect. "His political savvy is ahead of his best work, and that can be dangerous," Gehry says. Gehry's own international celebrity, he reminded me, came after he designed the museum in Bilbao, which wasn't finished until he was nearly seventy. "Part of me thinks he's in over his head, and yet part of me thinks he's such a survivor, and with her"—Nina—"he can figure it out."

Studio Daniel Libeskind is now a large, diversified architectural practice employing a hundred and thirty-five people, with satellite offices in Toronto, London, Zurich, Bern, Tel Aviv, and Denver. Most of those offices are in spaces that the Libeskinds sublet from large firms that serve as their local partners. Until this summer, when they moved some of the staff to an office on Rector Street, overlooking Trinity Church in lower Manhattan, the main Libeskind office was in an industrial-style loft space in Berlin, where thirty people worked. The operation is a curious mixture of the casual and the corporate. Daniel didn’t have a private office in Berlin, and when he was not on the road he would wander from desk to desk, critiquing work like a professor in an architecture school. He did most of his own work at home, where he kept a library of about a thousand architecture books. (Since the Libeskinds’ new loft won’t be big enough for the library, they are making room for it in the office on Rector Street, where Daniel will have a private space, opposite Nina’s.) Most of the staff members are young and work long hours, and Nina and Daniel treat them as something between employees and apprentices. Nina likes to throw parties for them when big projects are completed, and she sometimes impulsively closes the office for a day when she thinks people have been working too hard.



When it comes to finances, however, the firm is less casual. Studio Daniel Libeskind’s rates are at the high end. Libeskind’s time is billed at three hundred dollars an hour, which is not much for a lawyer but quite respectable for an architect. Last year, the firm grossed between five and six million dollars and made a profit of roughly half a million. Of course, not all projects pay well. Nina estimated that creating the design for the Ground Zero competition cost more than seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars, including the work of twenty-eight employees, model-making, half a dozen trips across the Atlantic for Daniel and Nina, and several trips for other staff members. The L.M.D.C. paid all the firms in the competition a flat fee of forty thousand dollars, and all of them lost money. Only the Libeskinds could offset the losses later with contracts from the L.M.D.C. and the Port Authority.

Last December, when the seven architectural teams that had been invited to devise plans for the former World Trade Center site presented their ideas at a televised press conference, some of the most prominent architects in the world came off as mumbling captives of technical jargon. Libeskind, an American flag in his lapel, talked about arriving in New York as an immigrant and showed his slide of the Freedom Tower and the Statue of Liberty. He seemed too manipulative for some tastes, but the fact of the matter is that his scheme was very good, and in some ways brilliant. Of all the designs, Libeskind’s was the one that most seamlessly united the awesome and the everyday. He understood that people yearned for a symbol that would reflect a sense of impassioned mourning, and at the same time he recognized the urgency of rebuilding the city. Libeskind succeeded in communicating the notion that architecture—and particularly modern architecture—can have a moral component. It may not have been obvious that the sharp, angular forms he favors are the natural outgrowth of that notion, but it didn’t matter.

The dominant features of Libeskind’s proposal were the 1,776-foot tower and the exposed slurry wall—the concrete retaining wall that formed the foundation of the World Trade Center and that survived the terrorist attacks. The area where the original Twin Towers stood, their so-called “footprints,” was to be left open to a depth of seventy feet. The slurry wall would stand not only as a ruin but as a testament to survival, and the footprints would be a kind of sacred space. Descending into that space would be a gesture of mourning. Libeskind suggested that a pair of glass structures containing museums be cantilevered over the sunken memorial area, and his plan restored Fulton and Greenwich Streets, which had been eliminated when the World Trade Center was built. He made the intersection of Fulton and Greenwich the focal point of a new neighborhood. His plan also included a performing-arts center, a number of office buildings, and a train station that would serve as a hub for the multiple subway lines in the area.

All the architects in the competition were required to include a tall element in their designs, and Libeskind chose neither a super-tall office building, which would have been difficult to rent and probably impossible to finance, nor a pure, Eiffel Tower-like symbol, which would have been far too expensive to build without some offsetting income. His notion, developed with the structural engineer Irwin Cantor, was that the tall spire and the office building would share a structural system and an elevator core. This was both practical and visually powerful. But Libeskind has had to contend with a host of critics, the most severe of whom has been Herbert Muschamp of the New York *Times*, who, after initially praising his scheme as “a perfect balance between aggression and desire,” turned vociferously against it in the weeks before the final selection. He called it “stunted,” “predictably kitsch,” and “demagogic.” The New York *Post* published an editorial titled “Control Freak,” which referred to Libeskind as “self-promoting” and “bizarre” and suggested that he should have no influence at all in deciding what should be built at Ground Zero.

The most awkward criticism of Libeskind’s plans came from Eli Attia, the architect who designed the Millenium Hilton, a glass slab just to the east of the Ground Zero site. Attia published a study suggesting that Libeskind’s Wedge of Light, a plaza at Fulton Street, was based on a fraudulent principle. Libeskind had claimed that every September 11th the sun would shine on the plaza between 8:46 A.M., the time the first plane hit, and 10:28 A.M., when the second tower fell. But, Attia pointed out, this would be impossible, since the Millenium Hilton was in the way. When Libeskind was asked to comment on this by the *Times*, he rambled on about Stonehenge and the sun as a ball of fire, and said he believed his design “is about radiating light, reflecting light, the atmosphere of light. It’s not about tricks of light but about how light behaves when you look at the sun in three-dimensional form.” For the first time, he sounded as though he didn’t know what he was talking about.

There was also trouble with the Port Authority, which had been a somewhat reluctant partner in the L.M.D.C.’s architectural competition. Port Authority officials began to talk privately about the need to have an expert in transit architecture design the central transit station. By late spring, it became clear that Libeskind would not end up with more than a consulting role in the station, and in July the Port Authority designated Santiago Calatrava, the Spanish-born architect known for his bridges and his soaring glass structures, to design the station.

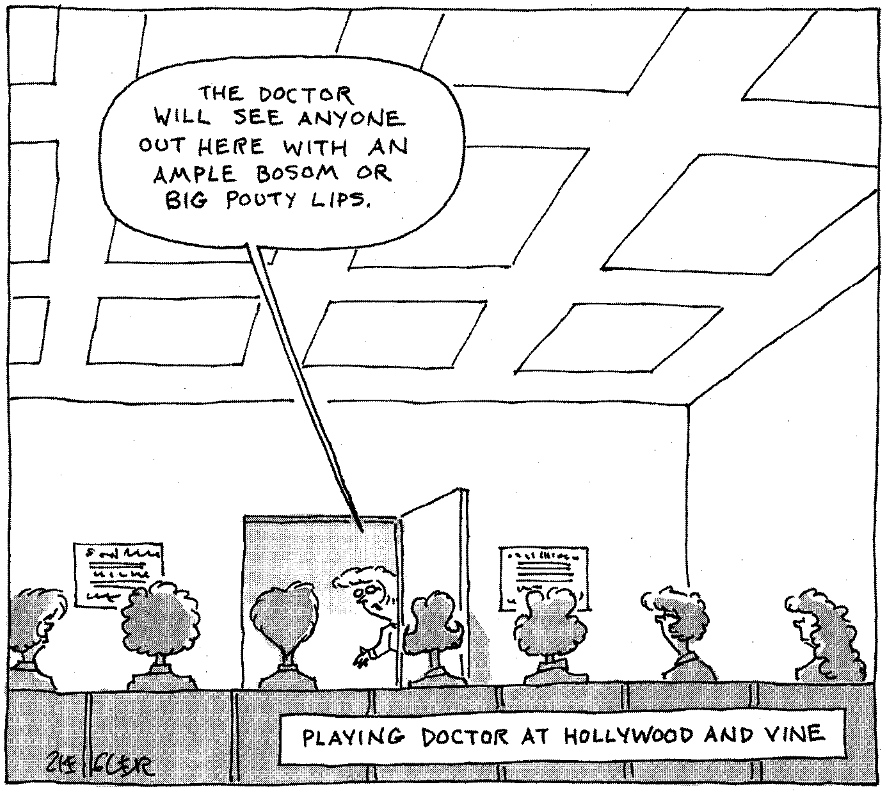
Westfield, the enormous mall operator that leased the Trade Center's retail space, wants to build something like a suburban shopping center on the site, and while Libeskind was trying to resist Westfield he was attacked by left-wing urban planners as having made the project too commercial. His master plan contains ten million square feet of office space, which is what Larry Silverstein and the Port Authority asked for, and it seemed to some people that he had simply conferred an avant-garde veneer on an immense business development. A couple of members of the L.M.D.C.'s board, Carl Weisbrod and Madelyn Wils, who represent the lower Manhattan business and residential communities, objected to the sunken memorial space, because some of their constituents don't want to walk around it to get from Battery Park City to the subway. They thought the memorial should be moved to ground level. (The seventy-foot exposure had already been changed to thirty feet, for engineering reasons.) The L.M.D.C. defended Libeskind, however, and there appears to be almost no chance that the memorial site will be moved to ground level, or that the area will be turned into a big mall.

Building in New York City has always been a matter of money and politics as much as architecture, with predictably mediocre results. But it seemed, for a while, that the city's usual way of doing business would be suspended during the rebuilding of Ground Zero, since public sentiment demanded something more high-minded than the conventional New York real-estate deal. Hiring Daniel Libeskind was a good start. In the last few months, however, it has become clear that Ground Zero is not going to be remade as Libeskind would wish it to be. He is being made to conform to the city's modus operandi rather than the other way around.

The Berlin experience prepared the Libeskinds, in part, for what they are now going through, and they understand that the process of building is a struggle. "I think architecture should mean more than drawing some fantasy buildings to show in fantasy galleries," Libeskind said one evening over dinner. We were talking about the difference between the projects of his first years as an architect, when he found it so difficult to communicate in terms that ordinary people could understand, and the work he is doing today. I asked him whether he felt his zeal to be understood was a change in direction, or even an abandonment of the philosophical bent that he had thought would dominate his career. "I don't feel that I've betrayed myself," he replied. "I do feel there is a continuity with those early drawings, but I can't really say how." He went on, "Did I waste my time doing it? Should I have been out there trying to build a football stadium rather than in my studio drawing all those lines? I don't think so. But when I stopped teaching I realized you have a captive audience in an institution. People are stuck listening to you. It is easy to stand up and talk to students at Harvard, but try doing it in the marketplace. If you only speak to people who understand you, you get nowhere, you learn nothing."

Peter Eisenman, who was one of Libeskind's teachers at Cooper Union and later became one of his competitors for the Ground Zero commission, is, like many other architectural theoreticians, not a fan of the new, user-friendly Libeskind. "He's changed himself from an obscure avant-gardist to a mainstream architect," Eisenman said to me, "and what history does with that is anybody's guess." Nevertheless, Eisenman includes Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin in a course he teaches at Princeton on the ten most significant buildings of the past half century. "Every year, I give a two-hour lecture about that building," he said. "I consider it one of the most important buildings of our time."

Daniel Libeskind wants to have the impact of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, but he doesn't want to be Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. "The more you do, the more you build buildings, the more you become like everyone else," he said. "On the other hand, I didn't work all this time to make esoteric architecture." By accepting the demands of the Port Authority and Larry Silverstein for office space, Libeskind forfeited his claim as a visionary, but he managed to synthesize the symbolic and the commercial in a design that can still be called avant-garde, which is no small achievement. And he might get at least some of the thing built. ♦


THE DOCTOR WILL SEE ANYONE OUT HERE WITH AN AMPLE BOSOM OR BIG POUTY LIPS.
PLAYING DOCTOR AT HOLLYWOOD AND VINE

FICTION

THE SURROGATE

BY TESSA HADLEY

When I was twenty, I fell in love with one of the lecturers at my college. I know that this is a very ordinary thing to do. And I know now that lecturers, when they notice yet another smitten girl-child traipsing moonily around after them, simply sigh and feel anxious. They feel anxious and all the other things you would expect, too: flattered and confirmed and a little bit stimulated.

His name was Patrick Hammett, and he taught courses on Shakespeare, seventeenth-century poetry, and critical theory. I took all his classes; I made him my interpreter of the whole world. Patrick was tall, with rather bowed shoulders; he was hollowly thin except for a small soft beer belly nestled in the stretched cloth of his T-shirt above his belt. He wore his thick black hair down to his shoulders, tucked behind his ears. He used gold-rimmed glasses to read but took them off when he was talking, swung them in his fingers, and sometimes dropped them; without the glasses, his eyes were deep-set and squinted slightly. In a crowd, in a club, you wouldn't have picked him out as particularly good-looking. But in the lecture room, sitting with us in the democratic circle of chairs that he insisted upon, his looks were a power, a force that I felt physically, like velvet against my skin. I loved the whitened pressure points that his glasses left on the bridge of his thin crooked nose. I loved the big nervous hands he was always waving in the air, gesturing uncontrollably as he spoke.

Of course I didn't have a chance with him. Who was I? I wasn't anybody. I wasn't even one of the cleverest students in his classes. I wasn't an absolutely average student, either; I was aware that I had a quirky way of seeing things, which sometimes came out as insight and sometimes just left everyone looking blank. Patrick encouraged me. Once, he reminded the class of something I'd said. "You remember the point that Carla made in last week's seminar?" Another time, after I'd made some remark about freedom of choice in "Much Ado About Nothing," he said, "That's very well expressed, Carla. I couldn't have put that more eloquently myself." This made me very happy. But I didn't delude myself. I wasn't the kind of student who would get a first-class mark. When I tried to put my thoughts down in writing, the dart of intuition that had been clear and sharp when it flew into my mind got tangled in something muffling and clumsy. And Patrick's occasional surprise at my penetration didn't mean that he had singled me out. I didn't really exist for him outside that circle of chairs in the lecture room.

BALDOMERO FERNANDEZ

In his seventeenth-century-poetry seminar he read us "The Exequy," by Henry King:

> Dear loss! Since thy untimely fate
> My task hath been to meditate
> On thee, on thee: thou art the book,
> The library whereon I look
> Though almost blind. . . .
> 'Tis true, with shame and grief I yield,
> Thou like the *Vann* first took'st the field,
> And gotten hast the victory
> In this adventuring to dy
> Before me, whose more years might crave
> A just precedence in the grave.
> But heark! My Pulse like a soft Drum
> Beats my approach, tells *Thee* I come;
> And slow howere my marches be,
> I shall at last sit down by *Thee*.

I can't adequately express the effect this poem had on me then. I don't remember now what season of the year it was, but I do remember that the fluorescent lights in the lecture room were on in the middle of the day because the sky was so dark outside, navy-blue clouds pressing close to the earth like an artificial ceiling. Little gouts of rain were spitting against the window, and in the gently sloping field outside (the campus was built up around an eighteenth-century house on an estate farmed by the Duchy of Cornwall) the bullocks, instead of lying down as they should have done with rain coming, were jostling uneasily and heaving up against the fence and clambering onto one another's backs.

When I look at the poem now, I see that it is the lament of a much older man for a young wife snatched away by death, and that it depends upon a confidence in the resurrection of the body on Judgment Day. I don't know anything about those things. But at the time I felt that the words of the poem were so immediate and relevant that they spoke to me not just through my mind but through my body. I could hear that Drum; its beating came right up out of the floor of the classroom and shook me through the soles of my feet.

I made one of those remarks that didn't come out well, and nobody took much notice of it. "He longs for her and she isn't there," I said. It sounded too obvious to need stating. I'd wanted to use the word "sexual" (we were trained to see sexual implications everywhere, and surely in this case I would have been right), but I couldn't bring myself to be the first to say it. Patrick wanted us to talk about the metaphor of the beloved object as text ("thou art the book, / The library whereon I look"). For me, the text was Patrick. All the passion, the concentration of the poem I attributed to him. It became my intimation of the pulse of his life, from which I was shut out.

He was only six or seven years older than we were, but his life seemed to be made of different stuff than the lives I was familiar with. As far as I knew, he wasn't married or living with anyone. Someone said that he'd once had a relationship with a student, although this was against the rules. That didn't make me any more hopeful. She had probably been one of the clever ones. She had probably been beautiful. I didn't think I was. My looks—I was small and blond with eyes that made the kids at school call me Frogface—were like the quirky things I said in class. Good on a good day.

I dreamed about him all the time. I don't mean sleeping dreams, although sometimes he was in those as well. Too many of my waking hours were spent fantasizing scenes in which Patrick and I somehow met outside the classroom and our relationship developed out of distant acquaintance into passionate amour. I was very exacting as the author and director of these scenes. Nothing could happen in them that was absurdly improbable or out of character. Patrick was never allowed, for example, to tell me that he had always loved me, that he had been fascinated by me from the moment I first walked into the lecture room. The scene could begin with no more than his friendly appreciation of an interested student, a teacherly investment in my intellectual development. He might at most be allowed a little stir of vanity at the depth and earnestness of my response to him.

Still, even given these constraints,

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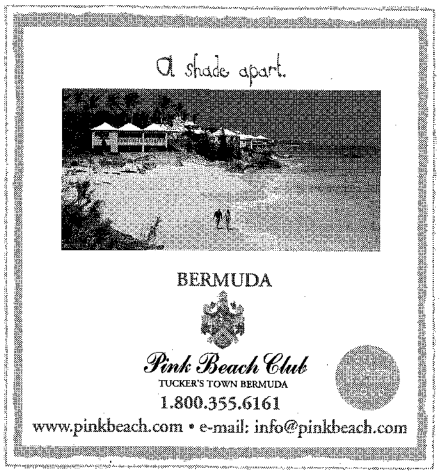
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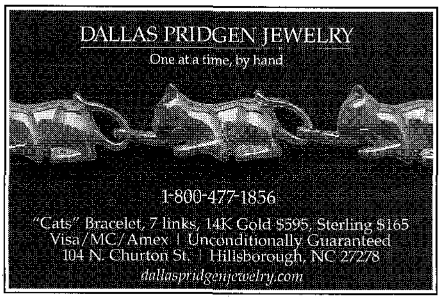
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the journey from the plausible encounter to the moment when he reached out for me could be travelled in a thousand different ways. (Even in my fantasies I didn't dare reach out for him, in case he turned me down.) He had to be surprised out of his position of friendly neutrality and into a dawning, uneasy recognition of his growing attraction to me, an attraction that he perhaps couldn't quite rationally account for. The transformation could be precipitated in various ways; these were the only extravagance I allowed myself. Sometimes we would be accidentally stranded by a breakdown in the middle of nowhere, after he'd innocently offered me a ride home from college. Or we'd be caught by a freak storm when stopping by the cottage of a friend of his to pick up some books. Or he would have to take refuge in my room one night after being beaten up by muggers and left bleeding in the road just as I was on my way home.

But my favorite scene took place somewhere I don't think I've ever actually been. I imagined a path through a green meadow. I needed to be clear in my mind about exactly how we'd got there. Sometimes it was in the aftermath of another encounter nearer home. ("Why don't you come for a walk next weekend, and I'll show you where Coleridge is supposed to have started writing 'The Ancient Mariner'?") Or a whole group of us had been out on a college field trip and Patrick and I, while talking, had got separated from the rest. (This was tricky to imagine, since the only trip he ever came on was to the theatre at Stratford.) Or he had employed me to do some research over the holidays and then on impulse said he'd like to buy me tea in the country as a reward.

We'd walk down the grassy path until we reached a gate, which opened into a wood beyond. At the threshold of the wood the light changed from broad sunshine to a secretive and dappled shade. There were rustlings among the fallen leaves that were spread like a carpet under the trees. It was a place I'd invented for a transition, for the passage over from my life to his, from his to mine. The gate was made of old gray wood washed silvery by the rain; it swung crookedly on rusting hinges. He held it open for me, or I climbed over it and he helped me down. Something in the change of light stilled us, made us pause; the wood with its pillar-like tree trunks and its tracery of branches was a cathedral. He was still supporting my weight, or I was cast up against him in some way as I came through the gate or passed him on the narrow path. I could feel the heat of his body under the ragged gray wool of the sweater he often wore.

I could only really sustain the stories up to this point. After that, his face came closer, he put his arms around me, there was kissing, there was a pressing together, and the narrative failed—it lost its sequence. I could—and did—imagine plenty of what happened after, but not in any clear way. It came in a hallucinated muddle that I would try to disentangle. I'd return again and again to the gate, the threshold, the movement with which he reached across the distance between us. I'd start again from there. But it was never any good. The dream beyond that point was a loop of film repeating itself. Exhausting, after a while. Dispiriting. Because in truth it was nothing at all.

In my second year I was so short of money that I got a job working three evenings a week at a pub in town. It must have been an old pub once, with lots of twisty little rooms winding around the different levels, but the walls had been knocked down and it was now one huge, cavernous space, low-ceilinged and gloomy. There were still confusing steps up and down in places, and the floor changed from flagstone to wood to carpet; drunks and women in heels sometimes tripped and spilled their beer. Video games flashing ruby- and emerald-colored lights stood against the walls. The place didn't have much atmosphere. It was more fashionable to go to one of the new bars with long pine tables and stainless-steel counters, where food was served; or to one of the quaint old pubs that had kept their little rooms and served real ale. Big parties came to my pub because there was usually room to seat them. And men came in, to watch football on the TV screens, the kind of men who didn't want roasted vegetables in pitas or real ale.

I'd worked in nicer pubs. When I

lived at home I'd worked in our local, where the old-timers expected you to start pulling their pints the moment they pushed open the door. I didn't mind the anonymity of this place. I was often on with temporary staff I didn't know, and that meant I didn't have to talk too much. If we weren't busy, I just kept order behind the bar. I made sure that the glasses were clean, the lemons sliced, the drip trays emptied, the bottles in the optics replaced as soon as they ran out, the ice bucket filled.

While I was taking care of all this I forgot that I was a student. I rarely saw anyone from the college in there, students or staff. But one night, when I came back from asking the landlord to change a barrel, I thought for a moment that I saw Patrick. A man with the same long narrow build and thick shoulder-length hair was standing with his back to the bar, a pint of lager in one hand, looking up at the TV screen. Although this was exactly the sort of plausible scenario I was always dreaming up to bring us together, in reality I didn't want it to be him. I panicked. I didn't think I could cope with my two roles at once—competent barmaid and besotted student—and I had no idea how to respond when he turned around and recognized me. But the bloke, when he turned around, wasn't Patrick, though he did look rather like him. Rather like him but quite different. He had the same crooked nose—more exaggerated, even—and the same close-set eyes that were revealed when Patrick took his glasses off. But he didn't wear glasses. He didn't have any of Patrick's concentrated excitement.

When he asked for a pint of Stella, his accent was ordinary, not like Patrick's educated one. When I smiled at him and made some comment about the football match, he blushed, and I guessed that he was shy, and maybe not very clever. He probably would have liked to keep the conversation going, but he couldn't think of what to say to me. And I got a certain pleasure out of the situation. I could play at talking to Patrick, without its really mattering. I made small talk as I handed the man his change and stayed with him until I was called away to serve someone else. When he left the pub, fifteen minutes later, he put his glass on the bar and said goodbye to me in such a way that I knew he'd planned it in advance, hoping that I'd be looking in his direction.

"Legal advises finger-pointing."

Then I forgot all about him. I didn't expect to see him again. But a week later he was back, and after that it was a regular thing. He came with his friends, and I think he would have come regardless of me—they were just a gang who met up often and were going through a phase of drinking in this particular pub—but he did remember me, and looked for me when he came in the door, and blushed if I served him. When his friends saw us chatting together they teased him. They made him go to the bar for every round, and then they whistled and laughed to encourage him.

"Go on, ask her," they said, meaning me to hear.

"Fuck off," he said, red-faced, pretending to be busy with the first mouthful of his pint.

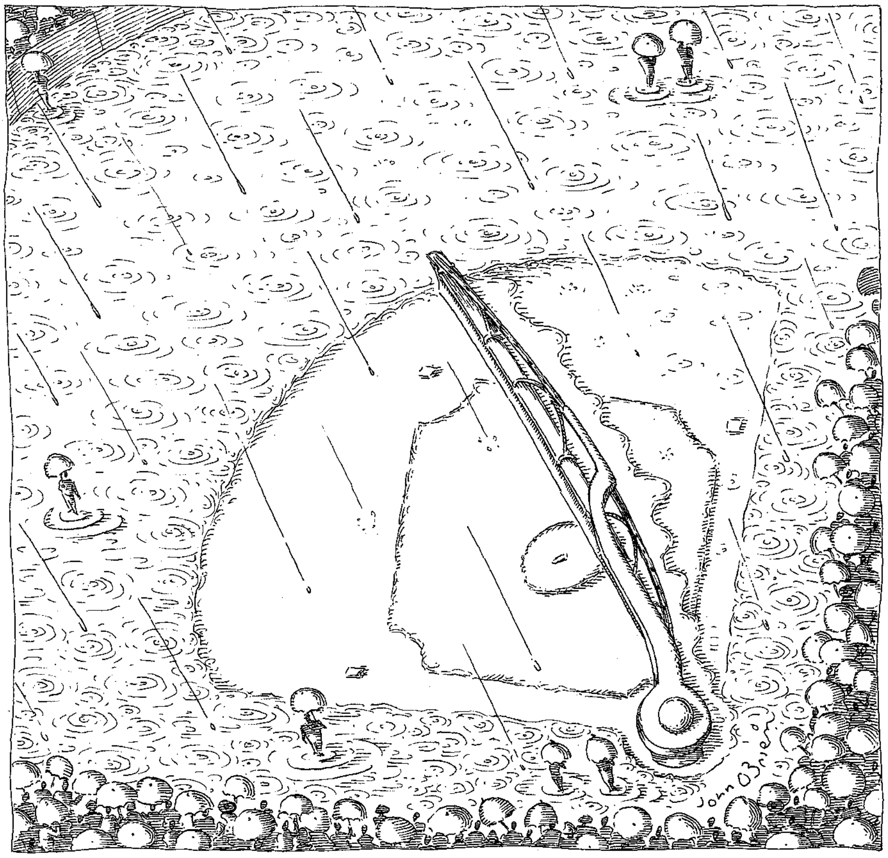
Every time I saw him I'd feel the same shock at his likeness to Patrick. People come in physical types; I've seen girls I immediately recognized as belonging to the same type as me: small and round with these deep-lidded frog eyes. There are dark ones and blond ones, but the type is as unmistakable as if we belonged to the same subspecies. And, even though there were specific points on which they didn't match, this man and Patrick had the same overall effect. The man in the pub was blurred where Patrick was definite. His skin was coarser. His hair wasn't as black and straight—it was dark brown, with honey-brown curling bits in it. He was a little shorter than Patrick, but more muscular, as if he did physical work. He told me that he was a gas engineer, which wasn't all that physical, but presumably more strenuous than lecturing on the literature of the Early Modern period. He had a little beer belly like Patrick's. His jeans hung on his narrow hips in the same way. Actually—oddly, considering how unalike their lives and personalities were—they even dressed the same. They wore tight V-necked sweaters over jeans, without a shirt. They wore black T-shirts with those little cap sleeves. I suppose they had both found the styles that suited them.

And soon something began that I'm shocked to think of now. Something that I initiated. It would never have occurred to him even to speak to me, beyond ordering his drinks, if I hadn't started it. I didn't just flirt with him. I went all out to make things go further. I knew that this was supposed to be a risky and demeaning strategy for a girl; it certainly wasn't something I'd ever done before. But with him I was safe because it didn't matter. It honestly wouldn't have mattered to me if he'd stopped coming to the pub and I'd never seen him again. So it could do no harm to play my game.

If I wasn't busy I'd watch him from my vantage point behind the bar. Sooner or later he'd become aware of this and look up from where he stood or sat with his mates, and then I'd smile at him, a long heated-up smile, and he would redden and look away again, smiling, too. When he came to the bar I rushed to serve him, even if one of the other barmaids was closer. He bought me drinks, and I clinked glasses with him and asked him about himself. When I gave him his change I made sure that our hands touched. I don't think that anything like this had happened to him before. He wasn't a complete innocent. (I found out that he'd been engaged to someone and she had broken up with him a few months before.) But he wasn't used to being pursued by a stranger.

The shock of his looking so much like Patrick never completely left me. On the one hand, I felt I had the measure of the man he was—pleasant and rather dull. I knew that he and his friends spent the evening talking about cars and football and teased each other in the explosive foot-shuffling, flaring-up way I remembered from the boys at school; from time to time, they'd run out of things to say to one another and sit in silence, taking mouthfuls of their beer. On the other hand, his appearance flashed a promise to me; it was as if Patrick's qualities were locked up inside him somewhere, if only I could find the key to release them.

Eventually I got him to the point where he couldn't help but ask me if he could give me a lift home from work. I felt embarrassed then, as if my game had gone too far. He waited for me while we cleared up, and reassured me that he'd had only one pint and was all right to drive, and then he led me proudly around the corner to his car, which looked very shiny under the street lamps. I hoped that he hadn't cleaned it for my benefit. I think he felt more confident about his car than about himself, but the impression was wasted on me—I couldn't tell one type of car from another. While he was driving me to the house I shared with some other students, we both went shy. I nervously asked him about his work, and he told me that he had worked for British Gas for several years and then set up his own business with a friend. For tax reasons, they'd recently had to split the business in two, one side dealing with boilers and central-heating systems and the other with gas appliances, although in effect they still worked together. He explained this to me in some detail, and I was bored. I was hoping that none of my housemates would be around when I asked him in for coffee, and they weren't.



It was always better when he wasn't talking. When he was silent I could recover the illusion I was pursuing. I barely talked to him about myself—about college, about my classes, about my plans. I barely talked to him at all. I turned on my lamp, which had a pink bulb, so that the room was dim. I kissed him, I touched him, I undid his clothes, I made all the first moves. I don't think he was quite comfortable with the speed at which these things happened. He was a nice chap—he would have preferred to take things slowly. He would have preferred to have me as his proper girlfriend. On the other hand, he was a man; he didn't turn me down. Perhaps he felt a little ashamed of himself afterward. Or ashamed of me, more likely. I don't remember him staying long in my room, I don't remember watching him while he dressed to go home. I think he shared a flat with his brother and another bloke, but I never went there.

We didn't "go out" together. We only ever did one thing together. For a couple of months, before I quit my job at the pub and went home for the summer, we did that every week. Of course I was pretending the whole time that I was with Patrick, that it was Patrick who was making love to me. Only the pretense was never complete. Even in the dim light from the pink bulb, even if I half closed my eyes and didn't look directly at him, even when I was mixing together in my mind the physical reality of our bodies grappling and one of my stories about Patrick, the knowledge that he wasn't Patrick seeped irresistibly in. This wasn't the real thing. It was only a secondhand enactment of love.

I have forgotten to give his name. His name was Dave.

Only a few years have passed, but a lot has happened since then. These are the years when a lot happens, when your life lurches across crucial transitions like a train hurtling across points at speed. It doesn't always feel that way at the time. At the time, you sometimes feel that life has slowed down to a point of frozen stillness. There's no tedium like the tedium of twenty. But all the while you are in fact flying fast into a future that has already been decided by a couple of accidental encounters or scraps of dreams.

In the end, Patrick Hammett reached out for me. Unbelievably, what he actually said when he did it was that he had always loved me, he had been fascinated by me from the moment I first walked into the lecture room. Or words to that effect. Which just goes to show that you mustn't trust a scrupulous realism, that sometimes sloppy fantasy comes closer to the true state of things. I became the person it had been unimaginable for me to be: Patrick's girlfriend, Patrick's wife. We had to wait until I had finished his classes before we could tell anyone about this, and those months were the most wonderful months, the secret months, when I had to sit in his classroom and engage in discussion as usual, as if there were nothing going on between us.

I love Patrick. I think we're well matched. But of course I'm not infatuated with him anymore. You can't go on being infatuated with someone you share toothpaste with, whose crusty inside-out balls of socks you have to put in the washing machine. I still count on his intelligence and his articulate way of speaking. But I get irritated at the way he gulps in a breath of air just before he pours out some hoarded-up information, and at the way he guides conversations around to an opportunity for him to be surprised at someone else's ignorance. When he's holding forth in an argument he fills any gaps while he searches for words with a loud "um," so that no one else has a chance to break in with a different point of view.

I never told Patrick about Dave. And I've never seen him since. I once looked up gas engineers in the Yellow Pages and found a company that might have been his. I couldn't look him up in the residential phone book because I never knew his last name. In my first few months with Patrick, if I ever thought about Dave I was just embarrassed at what I'd done. But then the idea of him began to preoccupy me, like an unsolved mystery. Why had he lent himself so unquestioningly, so pliably, to my fantasy? How could he have explained to himself what was happening between us? I try to remember the details of our lovemaking and I can't. I can hardly believe that we were pressed naked against each other again and again. I feel as if I had wasted an opportunity, longing the whole time for him to be someone else. What was he feeling when he didn't speak?

There's no real equivalence between my situation now and my situation then. I'm happily married to Patrick and given the chance would not even seriously consider throwing in my luck with a stranger I have nothing in common with. That little hunger for a lost chance gets expressed only in my fantasies, which contrive themselves almost in spite of me. No green lane, no gate into a wood. He is a gas engineer in the fantasy, of course. He comes to my house to mend the boiler. At first we pretend not to recognize each other. I show him the problem and hover discreetly while he works. He asks me to hand him a spanner from his toolbox, and when he takes it from me he touches my hand with his.

I wish he weren't a gas engineer. It sounds too much like a scenario from one of those funny pornographic films of the sixties, where the milkman or the postman is served up to the bored housewife amid all the conveniences of her own kitchen. But I've tried giving him another profession and I simply don't believe it—it has no connection with the real man.

When he stands up to tell me that there's a problem with the boiler's valve, he steps toward me and begins to kiss me. It's then that I see that what we did together has had consequences, for him. It has made him rather reckless, sexually. He has learned the audacity to reach across, through all the mess we make with thinking and talking, through to the body and the body's truth.

I have to be careful not to believe in this. It is only a dream. ♦

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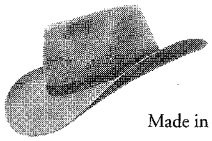

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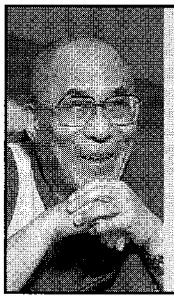

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BRAINWASHED

Where the "Manchurian Candidate" came from.

BY LOUIS MENAND

Most people know John Frankenheimer's movie "The Manchurian Candidate," which stars Frank Sinatra, Laurence Harvey, Janet Leigh, and Angela Lansbury in the story of an American soldier who is captured in Korea and programmed by Chinese Communists to kill on command. And most people probably think of the movie as a classic of Cold War culture, like "On the Beach" and "Invasion of the Body Snatchers"—a popular work articulating the anxieties of an era. In fact, "The Manchurian Candidate" was a flop. It was released in the fall of 1962, failed to recover its costs, and was pulled from distribution two years later, after the assassination of John F. Kennedy. It turned up a few times on television, but it was not shown in a movie theatre again until 1987, which—nearly the end of the Cold War—is the year its popularity dates from. The true artifact of Cold War culture is the novel, by Richard Condon, that the movie was based on.

Condon's book came out in 1959 and was a best-seller. It was praised in the *Times* ("a wild, vigorous, curiously readable melange") and *The New Yorker* ("a wild and exhilarating satire"); *Time* named it one of the Ten Best Bad Novels—which, from a publisher's point of view, is far from the worst thing that might be said about a book. The novel's success made Condon rich; he spent most of the rest of his life abroad, producing many more works in the genre that *Time* had identified, including "Winter Kills," in 1974, and, in 1982, "Prizzi's Honor." His adaptation of that novel for the John Huston movie received an Academy Award nomination in 1986. He died in 1996.

Condon was a cynic of the upbeat type, not unlike Tom Wolfe: his belief that everything is basically shit did not get in the way of his pleasure in making fun of it. He learned that attitude in the finest school for it on earth, Hollywood. Before he was a novelist, Condon was a movie publicist. He began, in 1936, at Walt Disney Productions, where he promoted "Fantasia" and "Dumbo," among other animated masterpieces, and moved on to a succession of studios, finishing up at United Artists, which he left in 1957. He didn't know what he wanted to do next; he just wanted out. "The only thing I knew how to do was spell," he later explained, so he did the logical thing and became a writer. Condon claimed that his work in Hollywood had given him three ulcers. He also claimed that he had seen, during his years there, ten thousand movies, an experience that he believed gave him (his words) "an unconscious grounding in storytelling."

Frankenheimer called "The Manchurian Candidate" "one of the best books I ever read," but admirers of Frankenheimer's movie have not been so gracious. Greil Marcus, in a characteristically overheated appreciation of the movie in the British Film Institute's Film Classics series, calls the novel a "cheaply paranoid fantasy," and he goes on, "That the story would lodge in the nation's psyche and stay there was the work of other hands." The film historian David Thomson describes it as "a book written so that an idiot could film it." No doubt Condon wrote "The Manchurian Candidate" with a movie deal in mind. It was his second novel; his first, called "The Oldest Confession," was also made into a movie—"The Happy Thieves," starring Rex Harrison (a flop that stayed a flop). But the claim that Condon's "Manchurian Candidate" is not much more than a draft for the screenplay (which was written by George Axelrod, the author of "The Seven Year Itch") is peculiar. Michael Crichton writes books that any idiot can film; he practically supplies camera angles. But Condon's is not an easy book to film, in part because its tone is not readily imitated cinematically, and in part because much of it is, or was in 1962, virtually unfilmable. Strange as the movie is—a thriller teetering on the edge of camp—the book is stranger.

Time, a magazine whose editors, after all, have daily experience with overcooked prose, was not wrong in seeing something splendid in the badness of Condon's book. "The Manchurian Candidate" may be pulp, but it is very tony pulp. It is a man in a tartan tuxedo, chicken à la king with shaved truffles, a signed LeRoy Neiman. It's Mickey Spillane with an M.F.A., and a kind of summa of the styles of paperback fiction circa 1959. The writing is sometimes hardboiled:

> The slightest touchy thing he said to her could knock the old cat over sideways with an off-key moan. But what could he do? He had elected himself Head Chump when he stepped down from Valhalla and telephoned this sweaty little advantage-taker.

Sometimes it adopts a police-blotter, "degree-zero" mode:

> "Thank you, Major. Dismiss," the general said. Marco left the office at four twenty-one in the afternoon. General Jorgenson shot himself to death at four fifty-five.

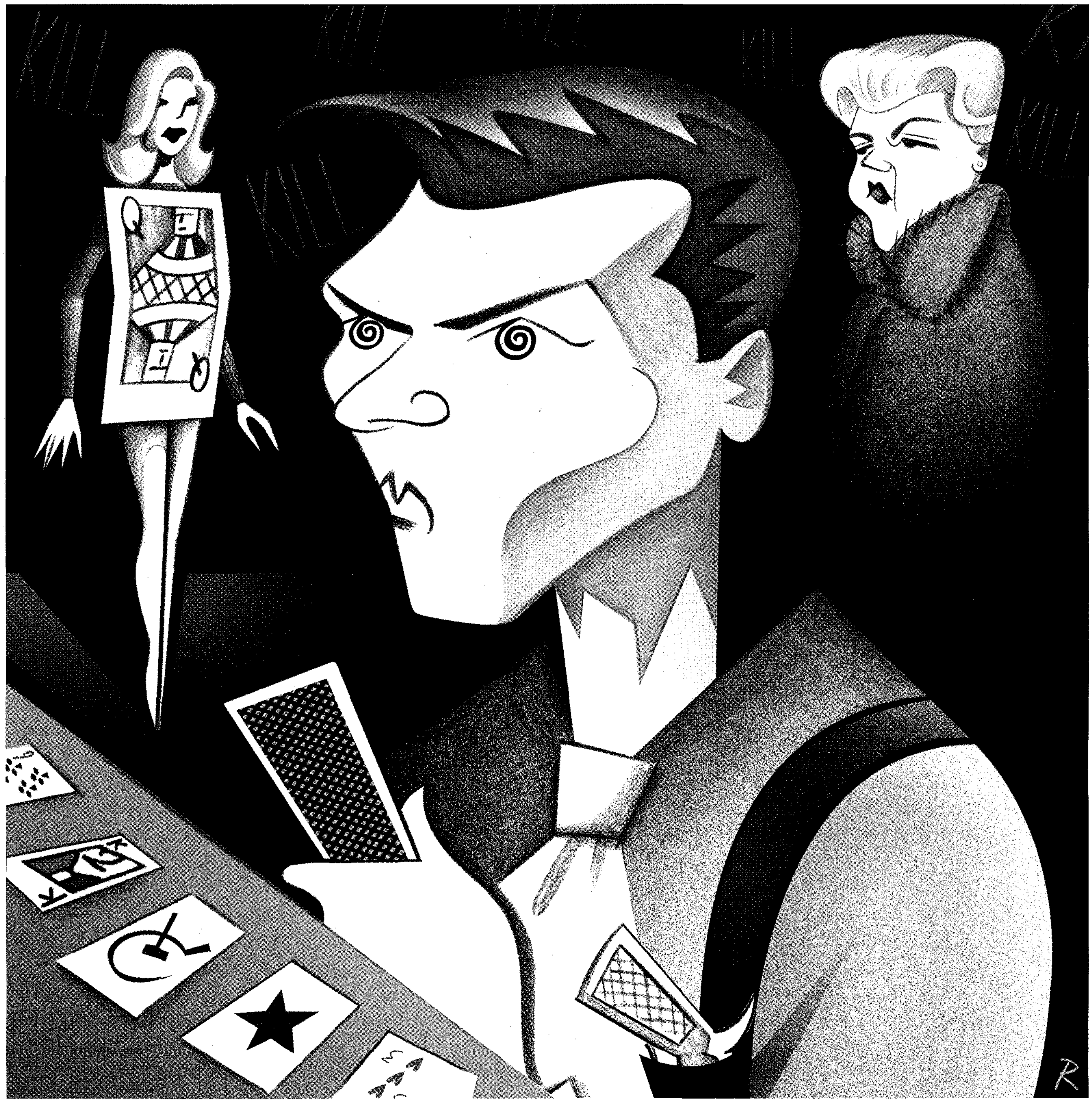
Occasionally, and usually in an inconvenient place, it drops a *mot recherché:*

> Raymond's mother came out of her chair, spitting langrel. ["Langrel": irregular pieces of iron loaded into shell casings for the purpose of ripping the enemy's sails in naval battles; obsolete.]

> He clutched the telephone like an osculatorium and did not allow himself to think about what lay beyond that instant. ["Osculatorium": medieval Latin, for a tablet that is kissed during the Mass. There appears to be no connotation involving clutching.]

It signals feeling by waxing poetic:

> Such an instant ago he had paddled their wide canoe across that lake of purple wine to-



John Frankenheimer's 1962 movie, largely ignored in its time, was based on a best-selling novel by Richard Condon.

ROBERT RISKO

> ward a pin of light high in the sky which would widen and widen and widen while she slept until it had blanched the blackness.

It signals wisdom by waxing incomprehensible:

> There is an immutable phrase at large in the languages of the world that places fabulous ransom on every word in it: The love of a good woman. It means what it says and no matter what the perspective or stains of the person who speaks it, the phrase defies devaluing. The bitter and the kind can chase each other around it, this mulberry bush of truth and consequence, and the kind may convert the bitter and the bitter may emasculate the kind but neither can change its meaning because the love of a good woman does not give way to arbitrage.

And, when appropriate, it salivates:

> Her lithe, solid figure seemed even more superb because of her flawless carriage. She wore a Chinese dressing gown of a shade so light that it complemented the contrasting color of her eyes. Her long and extremely beautiful legs were stretched out before her on the chaise longue, and any man but her son or her husband, seeing what she had and yet knowing that this magnificent forty-nine-year-old body was only a wasted uniform covering blunted neural energy, might have wept over such a waste.

Some people like their bananas ripe to the point of blackness. "The Manchurian Candidate" is a very ripe banana, and, for those who have the taste for it, delectable.

The magnificent forty-nine-year-old body in the last passage belongs to the mother of Raymond, the assassin, who in Frankenheimer's movie is played by Angela Lansbury as a proper and steely middle-aged matron. For Condon, though, Raymond's mother is no matron. She is a sexually predatory heroin addict who commits double incest. She is the serpent in the suburban garden of Cold War domesticity, and, in imagining her and her history, Condon almost certainly had in the back of his mind the book that, three years earlier, had become the first blockbuster in American publishing, Grace Metalious's "Peyton Place"—a story that also had to be sanitized for the movies. The plot of "Peyton Place" turns on incest (as, for that matter, does the plot of "Lolita," a sensation when the American edition came out, in 1958). But the luridness of Condon's novel did not make it to the screen. There is no equivalent in the movie, for example, of the proto-Pynchonesque sequence in which Raymond's stepfather, Johnny Iselin, attempts to have sex with an Eskimo. Frankenheimer's idea of satire was a lot more conventional than Condon's. He was also a Hollywood filmmaker, of course, and obliged to observe a different decorum.

ANTIQUE

I drowned in the fire of having you, I burned
In the river of not having you, we lived
Together for hours in a house of a thousand rooms
And we were parted for a thousand years.
Ten minutes ago we raised our children who cover
The earth and have forgotten that we existed.
It was not maya, it was not a ladder to perfection,
It was this cold sunlight falling on this warm earth.

When I turned you went to Hell. When your ship
Fled the battle I followed you and lost the world
Without regret but with stormy recriminations.
Someday far down that corridor of horror the future
Someone who buys this picture of you for the frame
At a stall in a dwindled city will study your face
And decide to harbor it for a little while longer
From the waters of anonymity, the acids of breath.

—Robert Pinsky

Counterintuitive as it sounds, the secret to making a successful thriller, as Michael Crichton and Tom Clancy have demonstrated, is to slow down the action occasionally with disquisitions on Stuff It Is Interesting to Know—how airplanes are made, how nuclear submarines work, how to build an atomic bomb. Ideally, this information is also topical, food for the national appetite of the day. In "The Manchurian Candidate," the topic is brainwashing.

Fear of Communist brainwashing seems an example of Cold War hysteria, but in the nineteen-fifties the fear was not without basis. United Nations ground forces began military action in Korea on July 5, 1950. On July 9th, an American soldier who had been captured just two days earlier delivered a radio speech consisting of North Korean propaganda. Similar broadcasts by captured soldiers continued throughout the war. At the end of the war, the Army estimated that one out of every seven American prisoners of war had collaborated with the enemy. (The final, generally accepted estimate is one out of ten.) Twenty-one Americans refused to return to the United States; forty announced that they had become Communists; and fourteen were court-martialled, and eleven of those were convicted.

The term "brainwashing" was coined by a journalist named Edward Hunter, who had served in the Morale Operations section of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services during the Second World War, which he spent mostly in Asia, and who became an outspoken anti-Communist. Hunter's book "Brainwashing in Red China: The Calculated Destruction of Men's Minds" appeared in 1951. In it, he explained that "brainwashing" was his translation of the Chinese term *hsi-nao*, which means "cleansing of the mind," and which he said he had heard frequently when speaking with Europeans who had been caught inside China in 1949, the year of Mao's revolution.

In 1955, two years after the armistice ending the Korean War, the Army issued a huge report on the treatment of American prisoners called "POW: The Fight Continues After the Battle." The Army had interviewed all surviving prisoners of war on the ships that brought them back across the Pacific—more than four thousand soldiers—and had learned that many of them underwent intensive indoctrination by Chinese Communists. The Chinese had carefully segregated the prisoners they had identified as incorrigibles, sometimes housing them in separate camps, and had subjected the prisoners they judged to be potential converts to five hours of indoctrination a day, in classes that combined propaganda by the instructors with "confessions" by the prisoners. In some cases, physical torture accompanied the indoctrination, but in general the Chinese used the traditional methods of psychological coercion: repetition and humiliation. The Army discovered that a shocking number of prisoners had, to one degree or another, succumbed. Some were persuaded to accuse the United States, in signed statements, of engaging in germ warfare—a charge that was untrue but was widely believed in many countries.

The Army report instigated a popular obsession with brainwashing that lasted well into 1957. Stories about the experiences of American prisoners appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Life*, the *Times Magazine*, and *The New Yorker*. The term itself became a synonym for any sort of effective persuasion, and writers struggled with the question of whether aspects of contemporary American life, such as advertising and psychiatric therapy, might really be forms of brainwashing. Condon must have read much of this material; he did know Andrew Salter's "Conditioned Reflex Therapy" (1949), a book he has the Chinese psychiatrist in his novel, Yen Lo, cite in the speech in which he announces his successful brainwashing of the American prisoners. Yen Lo names a number of other studies of hypnosis and conditioning, including "The Seduction of the Innocent," by Frederic Wertham, an alarmist account of the way comic books corrupt the minds of American youth. (Yen Lo evidently has, in addition to his other exceptional powers, a crystal ball, since "Seduction of the Innocent" was not published until 1954, after the Korean War was over.) These books and articles apparently persuaded Condon that brainwashing, or psychological conditioning using a combination of hypnosis and Pavlovian methods, was a real possibility—as the recent experience of the Korean P.O.W.s had persuaded many other Americans that it was.

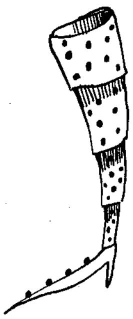
Condon's book played on the fear that brainwashing could be permanent, that minds could be altered forever. By the time Frankenheimer's movie came out, though, it had become clear that most conditioning is temporary. In 1961, in "Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of 'Brainwashing' in China," the psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton, who had conducted some of the shipboard interviews with returning P.O.W.s, concluded that the indoctrination of prisoners was a long-term failure. All of the "converts" eventually returned to the United States, and the former prisoners who had come home praising the good life to be had in North Korea soon reverted to American views.

Still, conditioning is the theme (if "theme" is not too grand a term) of Condon's novel. Even before Raymond falls into the hands of Yen Lo, he is psychologically conditioned, by his mother's behavior, to despise everyone. His mother is conditioned, by her early incest, to betray everyone. And the American people are conditioned, by political propaganda, to believe her McCarthy-like husband's baseless charges about Communists in the government. It is not, in Condon's vision, the Communist world on one side and the free world on the other. It is just the manipulators and the manipulated, the conditioners and the conditioned, the publicists and the public. In such a world, it's probably better to be the publicist, if you can deal with the ulcers.

Frank Sinatra, who plays Marco, the only friend Raymond has, is supposed to have asked his friend Jack Kennedy for his approval before Frankenheimer's movie was released. United Artists was apparently afraid that the assassination scene might give some nut an idea. Kennedy, as it happened, loved the movie; he was, after all, the world's most famous Ian Fleming fan. He was killed a year after "The Manchurian Candidate" came out. Did Lee Harvey Oswald see it? The problem has been examined in depth by John Loken, in a book called "Oswald's Trigger Films" (2000). Loken concludes that although the evidence is not definitive, Oswald almost certainly did see it. "The Manchurian Candidate" opened in Dallas in November, 1962, and played there for several months; Oswald, who was living in Dallas at the time, had a habit of going to the movies by himself (he was in a movie theatre when he was arrested on November 22, 1963); and Loken has determined that the bus Oswald probably took to work passed within ten yards of a theatre where the movie was playing. (Loken is much struck by the fact that references to "The Manchurian Candidate" are almost nonexistent in the literature, official and otherwise, on the Kennedy assassination. He concludes, in the spirit of all scholars of that assassination, that "the probable Oswald connection, so utterly obvious if one but thinks about it, has been suppressed for decades by a powerful conglomerate that might aptly be called the 'media-entertainment complex.'")

Immediately after Kennedy was shot, Condon got a call from a newspaper reporter asking if he felt responsible. Condon couldn't see the relevance, and he was not being defensive. He had not introduced political assassination to popular American culture. Robert Penn Warren's "All the King's Men" was published in 1946 and was made into a movie in 1949; a version for television, directed by Sidney Lumet, was broadcast in 1958. Assassination is the subject of John Huston's "We Were Strangers" (1949) and Lewis Allen's "Suddenly" (1954), also starring Frank Sinatra. Oswald might easily have seen those movies as well. More to the point: "The Manchurian Candidate" is the story of a man programmed to kill at the command of other people. What self-respecting assassin would take such a character for his role model? Either Oswald acted according to his own wishes, in which case he wasn't imitating Condon's killer, or he really was programmed by the Communists, in which case the question isn't whether Oswald saw Frankenheimer's movie but whether his Communist masters did.

United Artists withdrew "The Manchurian Candidate" from theatres in 1964, although the movie could occasionally be seen on television and in art houses. In 1972, Sinatra bought the rights and, in 1975, removed it from circulation entirely. Whether or not he was motivated by guilt over Kennedy's death is unclear. He did, however, give his daughter Tina permission to produce a remake, and it is being shot, this fall, by Jonathan Demme. (Demme's previous movie, "The Truth About Charlie," was also a remake, of Stanley Donen's "Charade," of 1963. His method, judging from that effort, is to update the story and then salt it with allusions to the period of the original. "Charade" was filmed in Paris at the time of the French New Wave, and so in Demme's version there are appearances by Charles Aznavour, Agnès Varda, and the grave of François Truffaut—none of which have anything to do with the story. Demme has reportedly set "The Manchurian Candidate" in the time of the Gulf War; Liev Schreiber plays Raymond, Meryl Streep is his dragon mother, and Marco is played by Denzel Washington. We can be fairly confident that at some point Denzel Washington will be seen listening to a Frank Sinatra song.)



The Kennedy assassination does not fulfill Condon and Frankenheimer's prophecy. On the contrary, it buries it. If any assassin might plausibly have been a Communist puppet, it was Oswald, a man who had lived in the Soviet Union for three years, who had a Russian wife, and who once handed out leaflets for an outfit called the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. These facts were widely known within hours of Oswald's arrest, and yet the theory that he was an agent who was directed, wittingly or not, by Communist handlers has never been an important part of the folklore of the Kennedy assassination. Until the late nineteen-seventies, the official line (endorsed, incidentally, by Condon at the time) was that Oswald acted alone. Dissenters from that view have been drawn mainly to theories involving the Mafia and the Central Intelligence Agency, even though hooking Oswald up with those entities requires a far greater imaginative stretch than associating him with the Soviets. Almost no one thinks of Kennedy (except in some convoluted way) as a casualty of the Cold War, and his death does not represent the culmination of the national anxiety about Communist infiltration. It represents the end of that obsession, and of the panic that Condon's novel and Frankenheimer's movie both so happily exploit. ♦

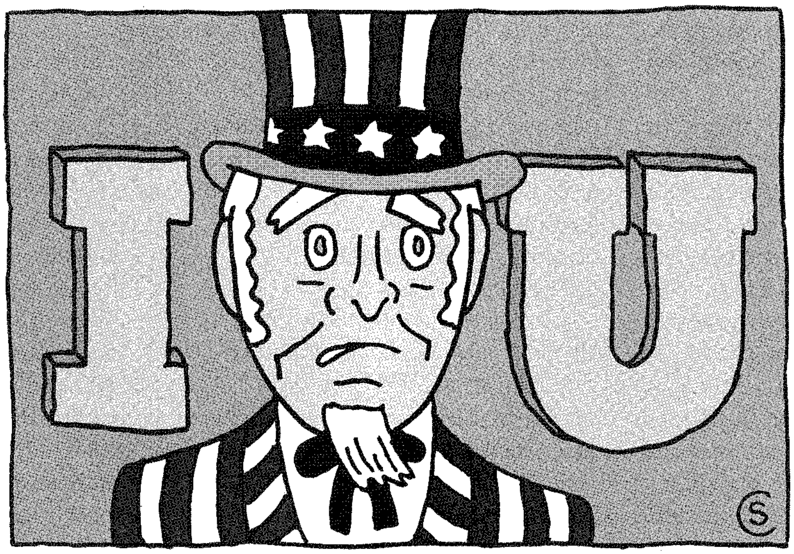
BOOKS

GOODBYE TO ALL THAT

Who killed the boom? Two economists make their cases.

BY JOHN CASSIDY

Government actuaries, like observant Jews, celebrate the New Year in the fall. In September, 2000, when the books closed on the fiscal year, the federal government had the biggest budget surplus in history, and it was predicted that the accumulated surplus for the next decade would be more than five trillion dollars. The big question during the election was what to do with the money; Al Gore, as you may remember, called for it to be put in a "lock box" for retirement benefits, while George W. Bush said that some of the money ought to be put back in Americans' pockets. Three years later, it all sounds like a debate between pre-Copernican astronomers. In the fiscal year that ends this September 30th, the deficit is expected to exceed four hundred billion dollars. And it is predicted that the accumulated deficit over the next decade will—in unhappy symmetry—be nearly five trillion dollars.



In the past three years, an enormous surplus has become a staggering deficit.

SEYMOUR CHWAST

What went wrong? Two of the country's leading economists, Paul Krugman and Joseph Stiglitz, try to sort through the matter in their new books. Krugman, who teaches at Princeton, started writing for the *Times* Op-Ed page in January, 2000, and has hardly paused for breath since. "The Great Unraveling: Losing Our Way in the New Century" (Norton; $25.95) collects his *Times* columns, a few articles from elsewhere, and a smattering of new material. Despite the inevitable limitations of such a miscellany, it represents a harsh indictment of the Bush Administration, which Krugman holds responsible for ravaging the nation's finances and heading us toward a financial crisis. In the past two and a half years, the White House has reduced the top income-tax rates, lowered the taxes on corporate dividends, and prepared to abolish the estate tax. But Krugman is equally enraged by what he regards as the Administration's deceptive presentation of its decisions. "Bush has pulled the largest bait-and-switch operation in history," Krugman writes. "First he described a budget-busting tax cut, which delivered the bulk of its benefits to the very affluent, as a modest plan to return unneeded revenue to ordinary families. Then, when the red ink began flowing in torrents, he wrapped himself and his policies in the flag, blaming deficits on evil terrorists and forces beyond his control."

To many liberals, Krugman is a beacon of sanity in a world gone mad; to many conservatives, he's an infuriating polemicist who distorts the President's record. What is beyond dispute is that he attracts plenty of attention; last year, the *Washington Monthly* hailed Krugman as "the most important political columnist in America." Certainly his twice-weekly column has been distinguished by diligent research and a keen eye for cant. When the White House was busy distancing itself from crooked self-dealing by corporate executives at Enron, WorldCom, and other major corporations, Krugman reminded us how President Bush benefitted from dubious transactions while he was a director of Harken Energy. When conservative pundits were blaming misguided government regulation for the California energy shortage, he pointed out that the real culprits might be private power generators that deliberately withheld supply to drive up prices. (He turned out to be right.)

As a first-rate economist, Krugman knows how to parse the White House's figures to get at the underlying reality. In a series of columns, he noted that forty per cent or more of the Bush Administration's proposed tax cuts would go to the richest one per cent of the population, something that the Administration was eager to deny. Unlike most economists, however, Krugman is rarely content to let his figures talk for him, and the longer he has been at the *Times* the more outspoken he has become. "The Bush administration is an extremely elitist clique trying to maintain a populist façade," he wrote in a typical column last fall. "Its domestic policies are designed to benefit a very small number of people—basically those who earn at least $300,000 a year, and really don't care about either the environment or their less fortunate compatriots."

Krugman has never shied from controversy. When he first accused the White House of trying to turn September 11th to political advantage, he received sacks of hate mail, but that didn't dissuade him from repeating and amplifying the accusation. "Exploitation began within hours after the attack—and gradually it became apparent, not just to me but to a growing number of other observers, that we had some very unscrupulous people running the country," he writes. "Every administration contains its share of cynical political operators—without them, even the best man has no chance of achieving high office. But this administration seems to have nothing but cynical political operators, who use national tragedy for political gain, don't even try to come to grips with real problems, and figure that someone else will clean up the mess they leave behind."

To Krugman, Bush is the front man for a radical conservative movement that is intent on slashing the federal government, imposing conservative values, and further enriching the corporate establishment. "This is hard for journalists to deal with," he writes. "They don't want to sound like crazy conspiracy theorists. But there's nothing crazy about ferreting out the real goals of the right wing; on the contrary, it's unrealistic to pretend that there *isn't* a sort of conspiracy here, albeit one whose organization and goals are pretty much out in the open."

Krugman, who grew up in a middle-class family on Long Island, first studied economics at Yale, with William Nordhaus and the late James Tobin, two liberal scholars who combined technical prowess with an abiding interest in public affairs. At M.I.T., where he did his graduate work, and then at Yale again, in his first academic post, Krugman specialized in international economics. He worked out a mathematical model of currency crises, but his biggest contribution was to so-called New Trade Theory, which challenged the classical argument that free trade is always in a country's best interest. By incorporating elements that the older models had left out (economies of scale; the reality of imperfect competition), Krugman demonstrated that it sometimes made sense for countries to protect their industries from foreign competition.

Some of the papers Krugman wrote as a young scholar are still widely cited, and they earned him a tenured professorship at M.I.T. In 1982, he spent a brief spell in the Reagan Administration, working for Martin Feldstein, a Harvard professor who was eventually forced out of his job as chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers after warning that Reagan's fiscal sums didn't add up. Krugman himself was a Democrat. In 1992, Krugman met Clinton and endorsed his economic plan; some people expected him to become chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers. This didn't happen, reportedly because he had alienated two other Clinton advisers: Lawrence Summers and Robert B. Reich. Summers, also an M.I.T. wunderkind, joined, and eventually led, the Treasury Department; Reich became Labor Secretary. The Council of Economic Advisers post went to Laura D'Andrea Tyson, who was then a little-known Berkeley professor.

Left behind in academe—he moved between M.I.T. and Stanford before settling in at Princeton—Krugman entered the public arena by another route: he published a series of nontechnical books and started writing for *Fortune*, *Slate*, and the *Times*. His style of argument was always clear and often bristly; he never hesitated to lash out at writers he considered misguided (including me). Like many Ivy League economists, Krugman also did lucrative consulting work for corporations, including Enron, which in 1999 paid him fifty thousand dollars to spend a year on an advisory board. Krugman was then a mainstream neoclassical economist, who defended globalization, deregulation, and deficit reduction. In those days, much of his ire was directed against center-left writers, such as Robert Kuttner, who cited Krugman's own earlier work in order to justify a policy of "managed trade." Krugman claimed that his New Trade models were theoretical curiosities, and denied that they sanctioned any departure from free trade.

In the past five years, though, Krugman has become radicalized. During the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98, he called for restrictions on how "hot money" moves into and out of developing countries, restrictions that the International Monetary Fund and the Treasury Department fiercely opposed. Around the same time, he looked at the seemingly endless Japanese recession and decided that Keynes was right, after all, when he warned that capitalist economies have a potentially fatal weakness: they can get stuck in a "liquidity trap," which renders them impervious to government intervention. (Previously, Krugman had argued that the central bank could always revive an economy by simply lowering interest rates.)

For a neoclassical economist, these were significant leaps, and more followed when Krugman joined the *Times* Op-Ed page. He was immediately confronted with the political realities that many of his colleagues in academe are content to ignore: the campaign contributions, the lobbyists, the corporate-funded "research institutes," the revolving door between government and business, and so on. "The Great Unraveling" is, in part, an attempt to explain how the federal government has been transformed into a political-action committee for the well-to-do. Instead of dealing with the problems facing the country, Krugman thinks, Administration officials and lawmakers spend most of their time trying to divide the spoils among their wealthy backers. "American politics has become highly polarized," he writes. "The center did not hold. Underlying that political polarization is the growing inequality of income. The result is a form of class warfare—driven not by attempts of the poor to soak the rich, but by the efforts of an economic elite to expand its privileges."

As regular readers of Krugman might expect, "The Great Unraveling" is more of a prosecutor's brief than a history book. But tax cuts and Republican deceits are hardly the full explanation for what has gone wrong in the past few years. The economy has also been subjected to a stock-market collapse, a recession, a terrorist attack, and two foreign wars, all of which have had major implications for the budget. Part of the deficit can be ascribed to slow economic growth, which has reduced the tax base at the same time that it has required higher government outlays on things like unemployment benefits. Krugman knows this, of course, but he hasn't tried to incorporate the various elements of the story into a coherent narrative.

Readers in search of that larger story should also turn to "The Roaring Nineties" (Norton; $24.95), an upcoming book by Joseph Stiglitz, another disenchanted luminary of neoclassical economics. In his previous book, "Globalization and Its Discontents," which came out last year, Stiglitz criticized the I.M.F. and its backers in the Treasury Department. Now he has turned his attention to domestic matters, and the result is a long and surprisingly critical account of economic policy in the Clinton Administration.

Stiglitz writes as something of an insider: from 1993 to 1995, he was a member of the Council of Economic Advisers; from 1995 to 1997, he was its chairman. At the time, he was not known to have voiced serious concerns, but now he argues that many of the problems afflicting the country date back to the Clinton Administration. "Americans should face up to the fact that in the very boom were planted some of the seeds of destruction, seeds which would not yield their noxious fruits for several years," Stiglitz writes. Accounting standards were allowed to slacken, deregulation was mindlessly pursued, and corporate greed indulged. In short, he says, "we were too swept up by the deregulation, pro-business mantra."

Stiglitz's academic credentials are, if anything, even stronger than Krugman's. Since getting his Ph.D. from M.I.T., in the late sixties, he has taught at Yale, Oxford, Stanford, Princeton, and Columbia, where he is now based. In 2001, he was awarded a Nobel Prize for work done thirty years ago that explored situations in which one party to a transaction knows more than the other party, such as when somebody takes out life insurance. (Typically, the buyer knows more about his health than the insurance company does.) Stiglitz showed that if the problem of "asymmetric information" gets too severe, markets may fail to operate at all.

Stiglitz had made important contributions to a wide range of economic subjects by the time he arrived in Washington, and his new book reflects his frustrations during his tenure there. His skeptical advice about deregulation and free enterprise was regularly ignored by Robert Rubin and Lawrence Summers, whose neoliberal views came to dominate policy. It was the Clinton Administration, Stiglitz reminds us, that deregulated the two sectors at the center of the boom-bust cycle: telecommunications and finance. It was the Clinton Administration that shifted tax policy in a regressive direction, by cutting the capital-gains tax in 1997. And it was the Clinton Administration that stood idly by as corporate executives exploited captive boards and lax accounting standards to enrich themselves beyond all economic justification.

"We were, however, I think, in part a victim of our own seeming success," Stiglitz writes:

> At the beginning of the administration, the bold, broad-gauged agenda to address America's problems was put aside in favor of a single-minded focus on deficit reduction. The economy recovered, and deficit reduction was given the credit, and with that credit, the credibility of those who had advocated it soared. If they advocated deregulation, we should listen to their wisdom. If they advocated deregulation for their own industry, we should be particularly attentive—after all, who knows more about financial markets than the financiers. So enthralled with our seeming success, we put aside two centuries of experience about problems of conflicts of interest—let alone the lessons in the recent advances in the economics of asymmetric information.

Stiglitz's critique of Clinton's economic record is novel, and there's much to be said for his central point that "misguided deregulation, misguided tax policies, and misguided accounting practices"—all dating back to the Clinton Administration—"are at the core of the current downturn." But he's less persuasive when he claims that the long nineties boom had more to do with monetary policy, improvements in technology, and the opening up of global markets than it did with deficit reduction—the policy that Clinton will always be primarily associated with.

In early 1993, under the influence of Rubin and Summers, Clinton reluctantly embraced tax increases and spending restraints. This decision turned out to be inspired. Bond prices rose, long-term interest rates fell, and the stock market took off. The rally in the financial markets encouraged spending by corporations and consumers, and the two trends were mutually reinforcing. Stiglitz doesn't dispute this part of the story, but he gives the credit to the Federal Reserve, which kept interest rates low as the economy recovered. Curiously, he fails to mention the reason that Alan Greenspan and his colleagues were willing to do so: they recognized that a President was finally adopting a sensible fiscal strategy. Without the commitment to a balanced budget, the Fed would have raised interest rates much earlier. In this instance, Stiglitz has taken his revisionism too far.

The key question now, of course, is the practical one: what impact do budget deficits have on the economy? Many people assume that all deficits are bad, but that's not necessarily true. In an economic downturn, when taxpayers get laid off and social expenditures rise, deficit spending can actually be helpful. Even during a period of economic expansion, the government can sensibly decide to run a modest deficit in order to finance education, scientific research, and other areas that the private sector refuses to invest in. Deficits are dangerous when they are used to finance unproductive schemes (such as tax cuts for the rich), and when there's no end in sight. Investors tend to be wary of such deficits, and demand a higher return for lending their money to the government concerned. The result is that interest rates generally rise, which rattles the stock market and chokes off spending by consumers and firms.

The Bush deficit satisfies all the requirements for a dangerous deficit. It is big and wasteful, and isn't even an efficient way of stimulating the economy, since the wealthy tend to hoard their tax savings rather than spend them. Moreover, the deficit won't disappear even when the economy is growing steadily. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, an international research group, the so-called "structural budget balance," which strips out the impact of the cycle, has gone from a surplus of 0.9 per cent of G.D.P. in 2000 to a deficit of four per cent of G.D.P. in 2003.

It's a figure that's likely to increase.

Many of the Bush Administration's giveaways, such as the cut in dividend taxes and the abolition of the estate tax, are "back-loaded," which means the really big handouts won't get distributed until 2008, or later. As it happens, 2008 is also the year that the aging of the population will start to deplete the Treasury. In 2008, the first boomers will be able to pick up their Social Security checks; three years later, they will become eligible for Medicare. Unless the retirement programs are reformed (and there's little sign of that happening), the aging of the boomers will have a crushing effect on the federal government's finances.

If a Democrat takes the White House next year, he will find himself, like Bill Clinton, seriously constrained by the need to deal with the aftermath of Republican profligacy. Should Bush be reëlected, the likely consequences aren't pleasant to contemplate, though one can debate just how dire they'll be. Krugman writes:

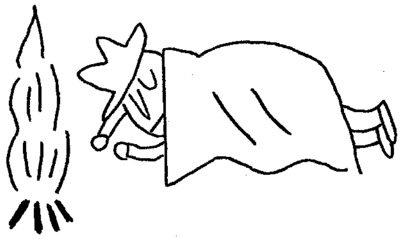
> One of these years, and probably sooner than you think, the financial markets will look at the situation, and realize that the U.S. government has made inconsistent promises—promises of benefits to future retirees, repayment to those who buy its debt, and tax rates far below what is necessary to pay for all of it. Something will have to give, and it won't be pretty. In fact, I think the United States is setting itself up for a Latin American-style financial crisis, in which fears that the government will try to resolve its dilemma by inflating away its debt cause interest rates to soar.
>
> You read it here first.

The last line is a bit boastful. For years now, skeptics have been describing the United States as the world's biggest developing market, and predicting an eventual reckoning. That apocalypse hasn't arrived, and the latest economic indicators are positive. Still, anxiety over the Administration's fiscal indiscipline is starting to suffuse the markets, especially the bond market. This isn't surprising, given that the White House is still promising to spend more on defense, health, education, and agriculture at the same time that it is cutting taxes. If mortgage rates keep rising, they could squash the nascent recovery and threaten Bush's reëlection chances. Krugman isn't the only one who would see that as justice served. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Brick Lane, *by Monica Ali (Scribner; $25).* Ali's sharp-witted tale explores the immigrant's dilemma of belonging. Nazneen, a young Bangladeshi woman, moves to London's Bangla Town (around the street of the title) in the mid-nineteen-eighties after an arranged marriage with an older man. Seen through Nazneen's eyes, England is at first utterly baffling, but over the seventeen years of the narrative (which takes us into the post-September 11th era), she gradually finds her way, bringing up two daughters and eventually starting an all-female tailoring business. Meanwhile, the more outwardly assertive characters—her comically pompous husband, her rebellious sister back in Bangladesh, and a young Muslim activist with whom Nazneen has an affair—lose their bearings in their various attempts to embrace or reject their heritage. In Ali's subtle narration, Nazneen's mixture of traditionalism and adaptability, of acceptance and restlessness, emerges as a quiet strength.

She Is Me, *by Cathleen Schine (Little, Brown; $23.95).* Elizabeth Bernard is plucked from obscurity as an untenured New York professor to write the screenplay for a movie, "Mrs. B," that updates "Madame Bovary" to "the Age of Ikea." Once she's been lured to Los Angeles, she grows as restless as Flaubert's heroine, whose initials she shares: she rejects her patient boyfriend's repeated marriage proposals and longs for her boss, a bullying producer who nixes her scripts because they lack "cutting-edge banality." Schine writes with the speed and punch of a seasoned comic, conveying character in a single line of dialogue. But this sly novel is a silver cloud with a dark lining—both Elizabeth's mother and grandmother have cancer. Just when we've settled in for froth and sparkle, Schine ambushes us with feeling.



Squash, *by James Zug (Scribner; $30).* Something about squash—the white walls, the cloistered courts, and the cruel ring of a tinned volley—inspires eccentricity. Zug, a former collegiate player, excels in describing the game's outsized personalities and how they won clubhouse fame and infamy. (Drilling the ball at your opponent's back used to be a common tactic.) But his account is hindered by an affection for bureaucratic detail—court construction, organizing committees, secondary tournament results—and he buries some of his best material in the footnotes. Still, squash fans will appreciate Zug's history of the game's complicated origins among English schoolboys at Harrow in the eighteen-forties, where it was a novice's version of the medieval game of racquets. The book also serves as an epitaph of sorts, the North American hardball squash on which Zug focusses having been rendered obsolete by the softball version which now prevails in international competition.

The Penelopeia, *by Jane Rawlings (Godine; $35).* Rawlings has had the marvellous idea of presenting Penelope's perspective on the Odyssey by giving her a narrative poem of her own, written in long unrhymed lines reminiscent of Richmond Lattimore's Homer translations. Homeric legend isn't big on psychology or equal time for women, so new twists are added to the old story. It turns out that when Odysseus left, Penelope was pregnant with female twins, and she and these now mature beauties go on their own odyssey to the Pythian oracle. Along the way, they are nearly raped and killed by relatives of Odysseus, and are kidnapped by Penthesileia, Queen of the Amazons. Penelope even comes close to abnegating the marital fidelity that in Homer is her most salient attribute. "The Penelopeia" will probably not manage to revise classical heroism in favor of the values of the distaff side (handiwork, conversation, and personal affection), but it is an engaging, and ingeniously rendered, curiosity.

THE THEATRE

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An intellectual in screenwriter's clothing.

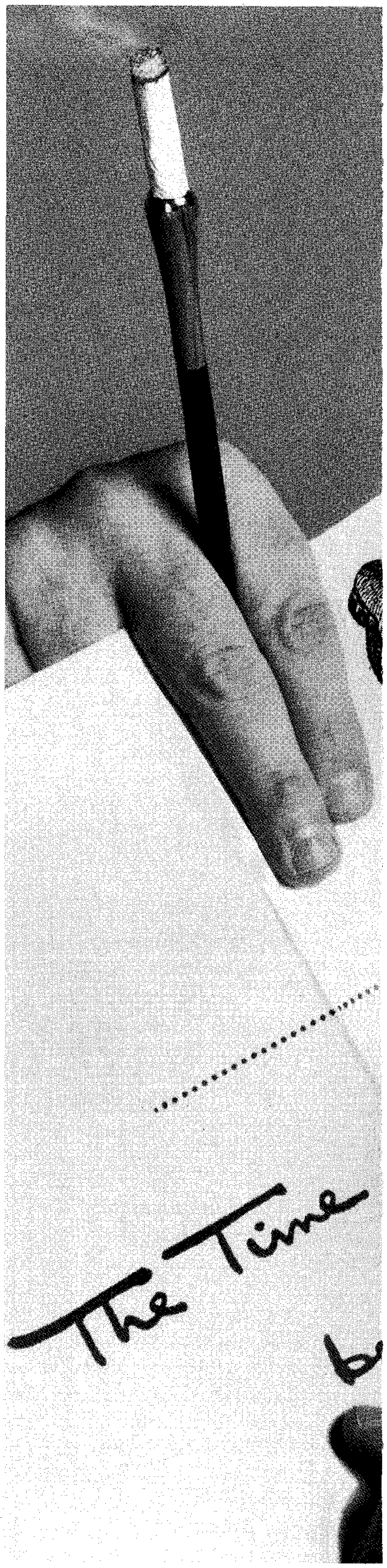
BY HILTON ALS

From the sound of it, Dalton Trumbo—the screenwriter for such movies as "Kitty Foyle," "Spartacus," "Roman Holiday," and "Papillon"—must have been one of the most divine dinner companions ever to grace God's green earth. He smoked. He was, when he wasn't typing in the bathtub (his preferred workplace), a natty dresser. He was never self-obsessed. And he had a propensity for living beyond his means, which suggests that he was probably most comfortable in the role of host, raising topics that were meant to enlighten or amuse, while tactfully steering his guests' attention away from the check. Born into an unremarkable middle-class family in Montrose, Colorado, in 1905 (he died in Los Angeles in 1976), Trumbo was a natural aristocrat who lived as if one could not and should not put a price on the supreme pleasure that life has to offer: discourse, the outgrowth of the active mind. What did it matter to this autodidact, who was as confident discussing Saint-John Perse as he was Ginger Rogers, if twelve bottles of very good wine had to be bought and consumed in order to uncork a companion's insight into this or that hitherto unknown passion? In short, Trumbo was both a sentimentalist and a snob, with more than a touch of the poet. ("I'm perfectly willing to go anywhere that I can live not, perhaps, in peace, but certainly in luxury," he once wrote to a friend.)

At least, these are some of the impressions one is left with at the close of Christopher Trumbo's moving and evocative stage portrait of his father, "Trumbo" (at the Westside). Based on a series of letters that Trumbo wrote to his family, friends, and enemies, the two-character play, starring Nathan Lane as Dalton and Gordon MacDonald as Christopher, focusses on the years from 1947 to 1960, during which time Trumbo, one of the Hollywood Ten, was accused of Communist leanings by the House Un-American Activities Committee and banned from working in his chosen field. When he refused to name other "Communists," he was sent to prison for ten months for contempt of Congress. From his cell in Ashland, Kentucky, Trumbo wrote letters home, many of which he signed "From Daddy. DALTON TRUMBO. Prisoner #7551." This was both a joke and a lesson to his wife, Cleo, and their three children. In a world where your views, political or otherwise, were punishable by law, he implied, you were no longer just a father and a husband, and you certainly couldn't afford to be a child.

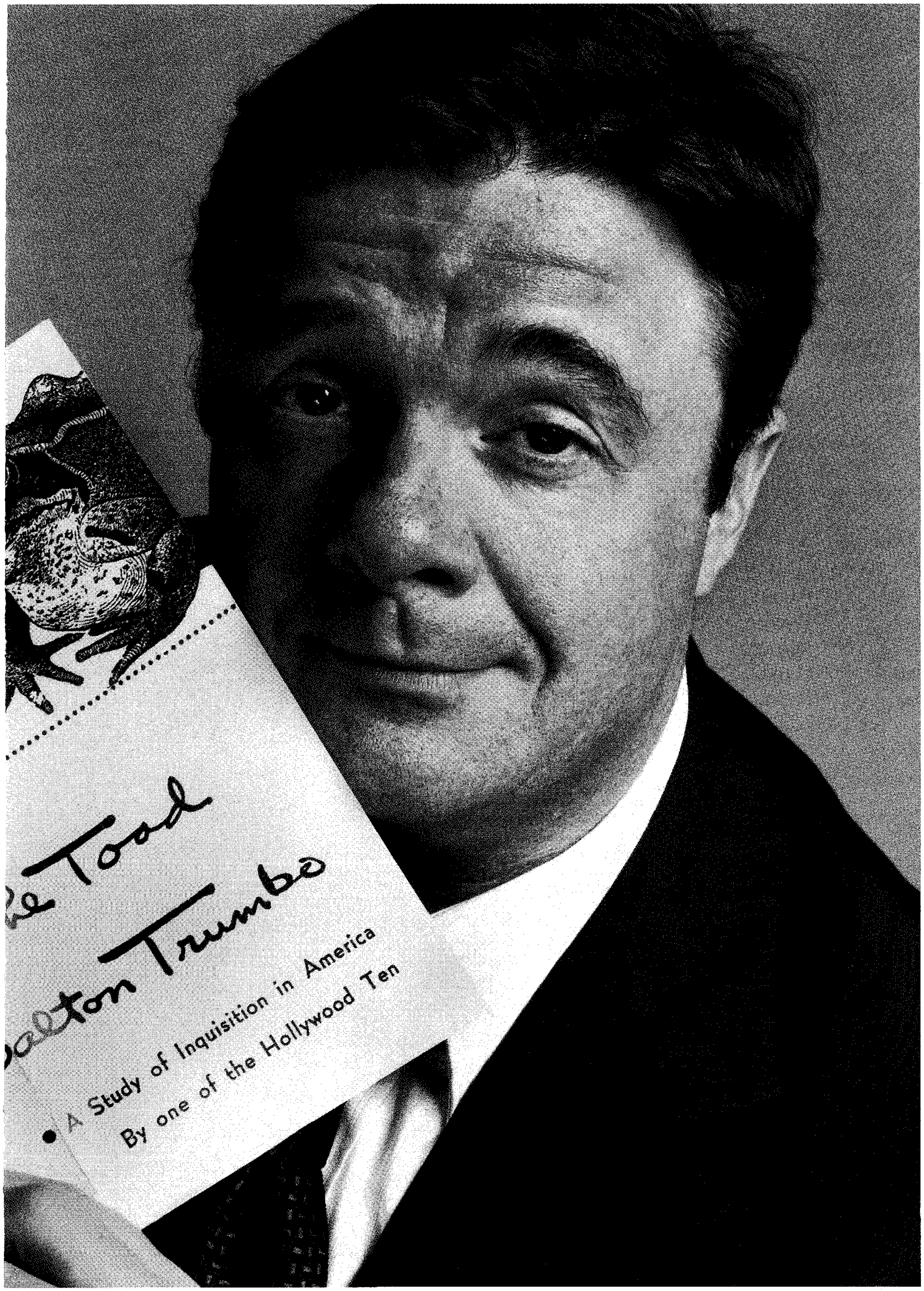
Onstage, Lane reads Trumbo's letters, and MacDonald, as Christopher, provides the narration that binds them together. Christopher makes it clear that Trumbo, from the time of his right-minded, high-handed appearance before HUAC to his return to screenwriting under his own name in the nineteen-sixties, got by without compromising his beliefs. Delicately, he taught his children the beauty inherent in freedom of choice. "Early on, my parents decided that they would be as truthful as possible with my sisters and me," Christopher says. "There would be no secrets—not about our situation, the possibility of jail, about politics, or work." He goes on:

> They told us to ask any questions we wanted. My sister Nicky was eleven, I was nine. Mitzi, only four, wasn't ready for these family briefings. Nicky and I wanted to know about Communism. It was explained to us that Communism was a system where people were provided for on the basis of "from each according to his ability to each according to



PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

Nathan Lane as the blacklisted writer Dalton Trumbo.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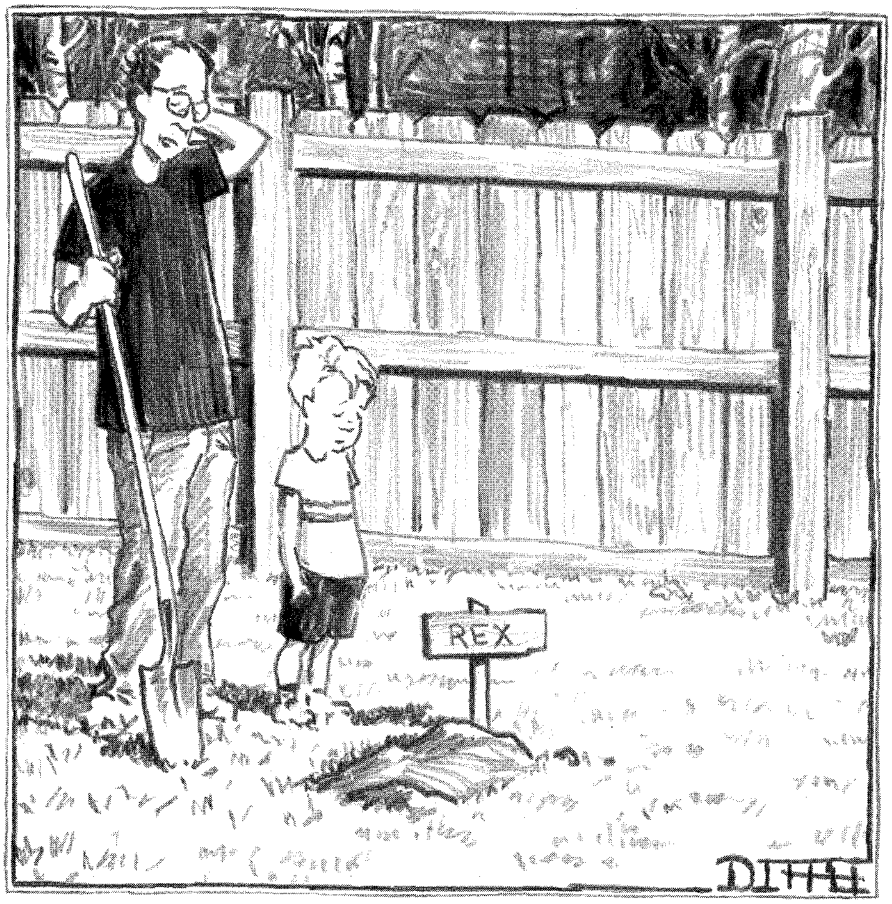
his needs." Capitalism was explained as a system where one person hires a second person to perform some task and then sells the product to a third person for profit. From politics we moved on to the idea of God and the major religions. At the end of this session, my sister stoutly declared that when she grew up she would be a Communist and a Jew. More modestly, I expressed a desire to become a Capitalist and a Catholic.

A kind of West Coast Atticus Finch, Trumbo was as much an educator as he was a writer. Self-expression was, for him, armor against the armies of the night. He was an intellectual in screenwriter's clothing, a thinker in an industry suspicious of thought. And yet he stayed, and worked hard, even after that industry had seemingly turned its back on him. Why had he embraced it in the first place? He had a family to support. He was highly paid. And he enjoyed the life style that his fame afforded him before the blacklisting. He never quite made it as a novelist—he was not possessed of a singular vision, and he knew it. So he wrote what he wrote best—a kind of populist-minded fiction—and he treated the industry that employed him with the contempt that it ultimately earned.

As played by Lane, under Peter Askin's assured direction, Trumbo is an aging chorine with a love of wisecracks and show. The small set alternates between Trumbo's various studies and his prison cell, while video screens on either side of the stage supplement the text with newsreel footage from the HUAC hearings. Seated center stage behind a desk, in a dark suit and with his hair neatly combed, Lane twinkles. He uses his distinctive eyebrows—sometimes raised, sometimes lowered—like quotation marks around the more ironic passages in Trumbo's letters. At the same time, he eschews much of Trumbo's imperious irascibility; he's far too adorable. In Lane's rather superficial reading, we barely glimpse the complicated and sometimes difficult man that Ring Lardner, Jr., his friend and fellow-member of the Hollywood Ten, eulogized this way: "At rare intervals, there appears among us a person whose virtues are so manifest to all . . . who lives his whole life in such harmony with



"Sure. Unless, of course, he's in doggie Hell."

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the surrounding community that he is revered and loved by everyone with whom he comes in contact. Such a man Dalton Trumbo was not." Trumbo was known, on occasion, to use his prized wit against his friends. In 1951, Lardner sent Trumbo a copy of his novel "The Ecstasy of Owen Muir," hoping for his comments. Trumbo responded by describing his reaction to a novel by Albert Maltz, another blacklisted screenwriter:

> I read it and found two or three major things that I didn't like. Cleo read it and found two or three other major things that she didn't like. I was so chagrined at having overlooked her points . . . that I went back to the book and read it most thoroughly again, taking many notes. The result was that our combined efforts found absolutely nothing in the book, aside from a couple of minor speeches, that we did like. Having gone out of our way for Albert, we certainly wish to do no less for you.

Instead of allowing the humor—and hostility—in this speech to build naturally, Lane preens and guffaws loudly in anticipation of the joke to come. He's in love with the Big Finish. This is not only distracting—it's cloying. MacDonald, at least, is dry, affable, and subtle, a perfect antidote to both Lane's cuteness and Trumbo's sometimes overwhelming id.

In what is essentially a biographical one-person show, an actor should convey not only the character's history—the history we see onstage—but also the life that followed. In 1971, Trumbo wrote and directed a film based on his best-known novel, "Johnny Got a Gun," the story of an American soldier wounded on the last day of the First World War, who loses his limbs, eyes, ears, mouth, and nose and has no way to communicate with the people around him. The movie is fascinating both for the poetic, nearly silent-film-style performance of Timothy Bottoms and for the way in which Trumbo was able to marry his linguistic facility to an almost surreal visual style. After what he had lived through, the surrealism of Trumbo's later work makes sense. One can't help wishing that he were around now to distill this nation's current wars into something just as sharp, curious, and uncanny. ♦

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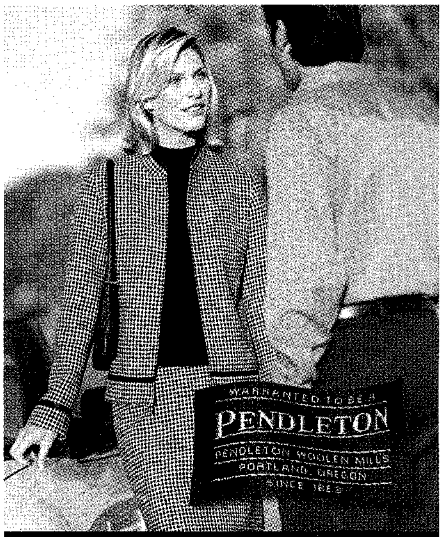

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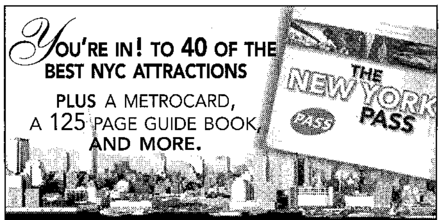

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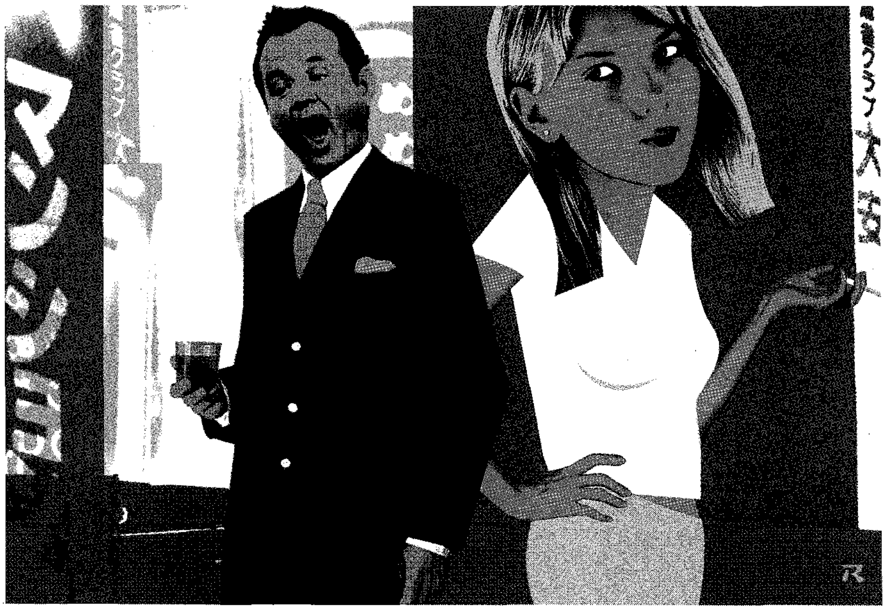
THE CURRENT CINEMA

HEARTBREAK HOTELS

“Lost in Translation” and “Dirty Pretty Things.”

BY DAVID DENBY

Back in the sixties, when the movie-porn revels were just getting under way in San Francisco, I knew a young man who occasionally took part in the industry as an actor. My friend would receive puzzling instructions from his director: “I want you to make love with cold passion.” But what in the world was cold passion? How do you produce it? I thought of his dilemma when I saw Bill Murray, in Sofia Coppola’s “Lost in Translation,” attempting to deliver a commercial tag line in a way that pleases the director of the commercial. “For relaxing times, make it Suntory time,” Murray says over and over. Murray plays Bob Harris, a movie star whose career is winding down. Stuck in Tokyo, where he’s shooting the whiskey ad, Bob knows that he’s whoring—he should be at home with his family, he should be doing a play or looking for a movie—but he needs the money. The director, a small Japanese whirlwind with lots of tousled hair, shouts voluminous and detailed instructions, which Bob’s translator renders simply as “more intensity.” But how do you say something inane with more intensity? Murray works through one take after another, and his ironic, slightly over-the-top final version is superb. He achieves cold passion.



Bill Murray and Scarlett Johansson in Sofia Coppola’s new movie.

JOHN RITTER

Sofia Coppola, directing her second movie at thirty-two (“The Virgin Suicides” was the first), is an observer, not a dramatist—at least, not yet. This is not entirely a weakness: there are veteran directors, and many new ones—working, say, in action pictures—who never observe a thing. They lack Coppola’s ability to see, to record, and to allow the juxtaposition of character and milieu to reveal itself, unharried, on the screen—in this case, to capture the loneliness and humor of a solitary soul looking out at a noisy world. Arriving in Tokyo, Murray’s Bob Harris gazes blankly from his limo at the frenzy of light and movement and then looks down from the upper stories of his hotel without seeing a thing. He could be a visitor from another planet. He can’t make a connection with any of it, but he can’t go to sleep and shut it out, either. The Japanese, in their politely insistent way, make all sorts of demands on Bob, and he’s buried deep within himself, lost in some frozen realm of sadness and disgust, too jet-lagged and defeated even to get angry. At the hotel, there is an American woman, Charlotte (Scarlett Johansson, from “Ghost World”), who’s in something of the same situation. Barely out of college, Charlotte is in town with her husband, a jumpy fashion photographer (Giovanni Ribisi), who’s rapidly slipping away from her into his work. The sensual Charlotte is in need of appreciation, and she gets it from Bob. The middle-aged actor and the young woman, unhappy with their spouses (Bob’s wife is just an exasperated voice on the telephone), are caught in emotional limbo; they want change, but they’re unable to risk it. Stranded and sleepless, and almost wordless, too, they hang out together day after day, an odd, inappropriate couple sharing a common funk.

Coppola doesn’t punch up her scenes; she’s not interested in tension leading to a climax but in moods and states of being. She’s willing to let an awkward silence sit on the screen. Not much happens, but Coppola is so gentle and witty an observer that the movie casts a spell. She captures the sleek pomp of a luxury Japanese hotel, with its intimidating high-tech look, its abundant staff mysteriously stepping out of the shadows and offering unwanted assistance in beautifully mangled English. And she re-creates the comedy of tourism: the elegant Tokyo hooker, sent to Bob’s room, who whips herself into incomprehensible ecstasies screaming “Lick my stockings!” (or is it, as poor Bob wonders, “Rip my stockings”?); the dark rooftop bar in which third-rate American lounge acts knock themselves out to keep the guests from falling into a stupor. All this activity plays off Murray’s sangfroid, the small changes in his expression—a flicker, a tightening, a demi-smile—which suggest a world of melancholy and desire below the surface. Murray has never been this quiet, this wary, this subtly acid before—or this warm. The drama of the movie, such as it is, lies in seeing just how much he will respond, and when.

When Bill Murray was young, he made comedy out of untrustworthiness; in middle age, he has turned into one of the world’s most appealing hipsters. He’s no longer surprisingly hostile; now he’s surprisingly benevolent. Charlotte, rousing herself, grabs Bob by the hand and takes him around to parties and clubs in Tokyo, where he gets drunk; when he sings a blues ballad in a karaoke joint, the emotion pours out of him with startling force. The relationship is perched on the edge of eros, but the way the movie is set up, it can’t fall off the perch into an actual love affair, and although Coppola’s taste and her determination to keep the anecdote small and ambiguous in feeling are admirable, the movie could use something grander, fiercer—danger, perhaps. It takes a great deal of courage for a young director to make a movie without action; it takes even greater courage to allow something momentous to happen. Coppola already knows many of the secrets of character, atmosphere, and comedy. Now she has to learn that she can shape a movie dramatically without slipping into banality or vulgarity. She’s two-thirds of a great director, which, of course, is a lot closer to greatness than many of the directors working in Hollywood ever get.

Okwe, the African-in-exile hero of Stephen Frears’s extraordinary London thriller, “Dirty Pretty Things,” drives a cab during the day, works as a desk clerk in a posh hotel at night, plays chess with friends, and keeps himself awake by chewing on some sort of African root. Like Travis Bickle, Robert De Niro’s overstimulated psycho in “Taxi Driver,” Okwe never really sleeps, though his restlessness is not propelled by loathing, the way Bickle’s is; he’s a good man, even a fanatically good man, which makes him a possible fool and victim as well as a hero. In four or five frantic days, Okwe tries to save another immigrant, Senay (Audrey Tautou), who, like him, is in England illegally, from the machinations of the cheerfully sinister manager of the hotel (Sergi Lopez) in which they both work. Señor Juan, as he’s known, offers forged passports to illegals in return for a kidney or some other vital organ that he can sell on the medical black market. There are a few grisly scenes in the hotel’s tasteful rooms, but “Dirty Pretty Things” is not a violent thriller. It might be called a social thriller—a creepy, tightly knit suspense film that, on the fly, reveals more about the lives of immigrants in London than the most scrupulously earnest documentary. Hounded by thuggish immigration police, the illegals also become the prey of their London employers, who take a risk by hiring them and then exact a price. The movie chronicles the way that exploited people take care of one another, exchanging favors while finding the holes in the porous British welfare system. The National Health Service is particularly useful: Okwe, who turns out to be a doctor from Lagos, becomes a one-man hospital, racing about town madly patching up the immigrant sick and wounded. The movie runs at the breakneck speed of his errands. A man of enormous drive and moral resourcefulness, Okwe is also free—free not to be respectable or quite honest. Chiwetel Ejiofor gives a magnificent performance as this underground warrior; Audrey Tautou, however, isn’t quite right—she’s too professionally charming, she overdraws on wistfulness, and at times she seems to have an empty space in her head where her brains should be.

Stephen Frears has quietly built up one of the most formidable of contemporary résumés. He has made at least five great movies before this one: “My Beautiful Laundrette,” “Sammy and Rosie Get Laid,” “Dangerous Liaisons,” “The Grifters,” and “High Fidelity.” Like “Laundrette” and “Sammy,” this movie celebrates the raffish survival skills of people who don’t fit in. Frears and the writer Steven Knight pause for the idiosyncratic moment—the sardonic jokes of a Chinese mortuary porter, the ebullient theatrics of the hotel doorman, a Russian who might have stepped out of a screwball comedy about émigrés from 1937. We are entertained, but we see this squalid world clearly. The great cinematographer Chris Menges keeps the images cool and crisp. There’s no murk, no “atmosphere.” However harried, Okwe the chess player has to anticipate every move as he defends himself and his friends from the treachery on all sides. ♦

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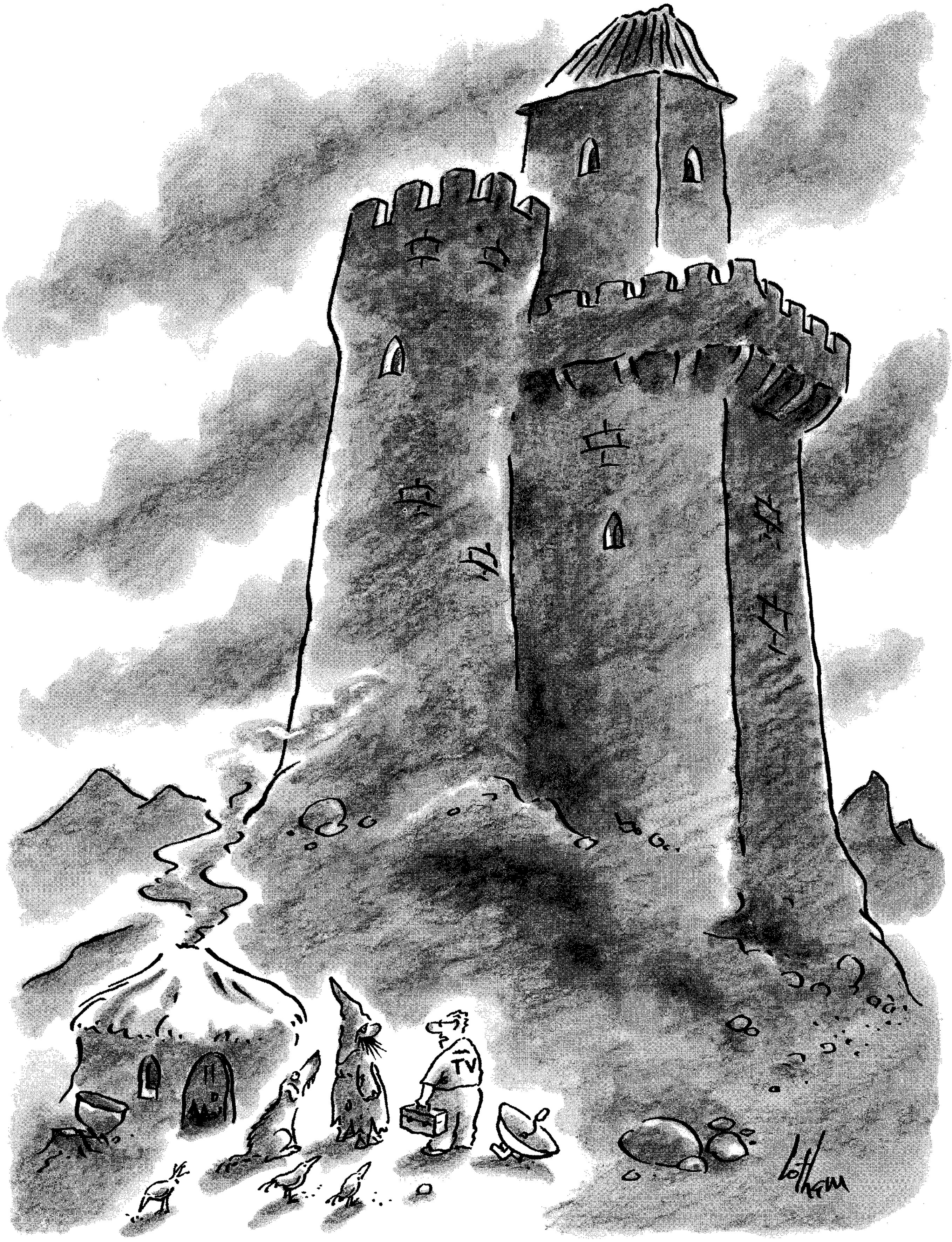
THE BACK PAGE BY FRANK COTHAM



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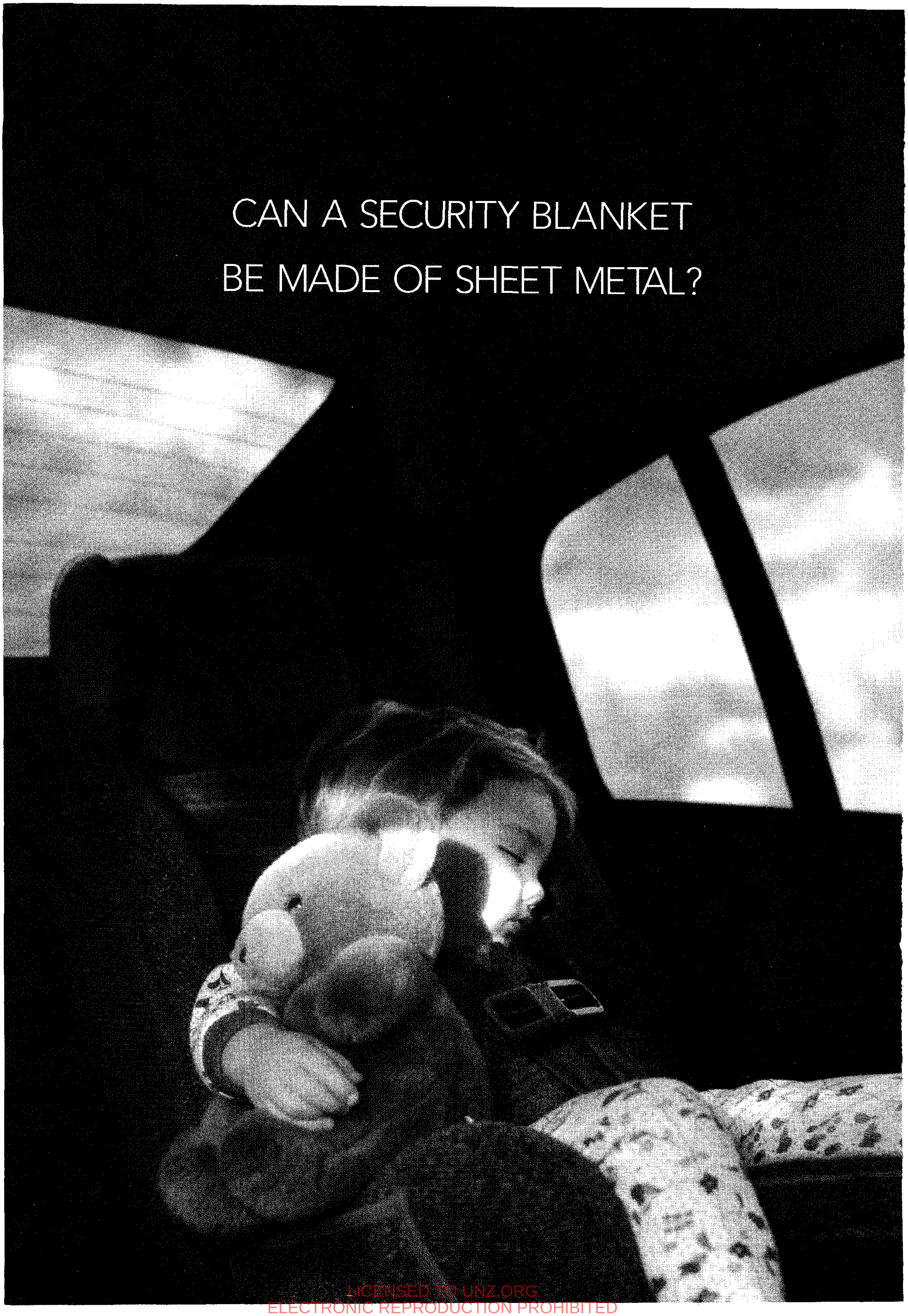
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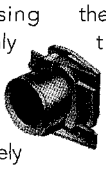

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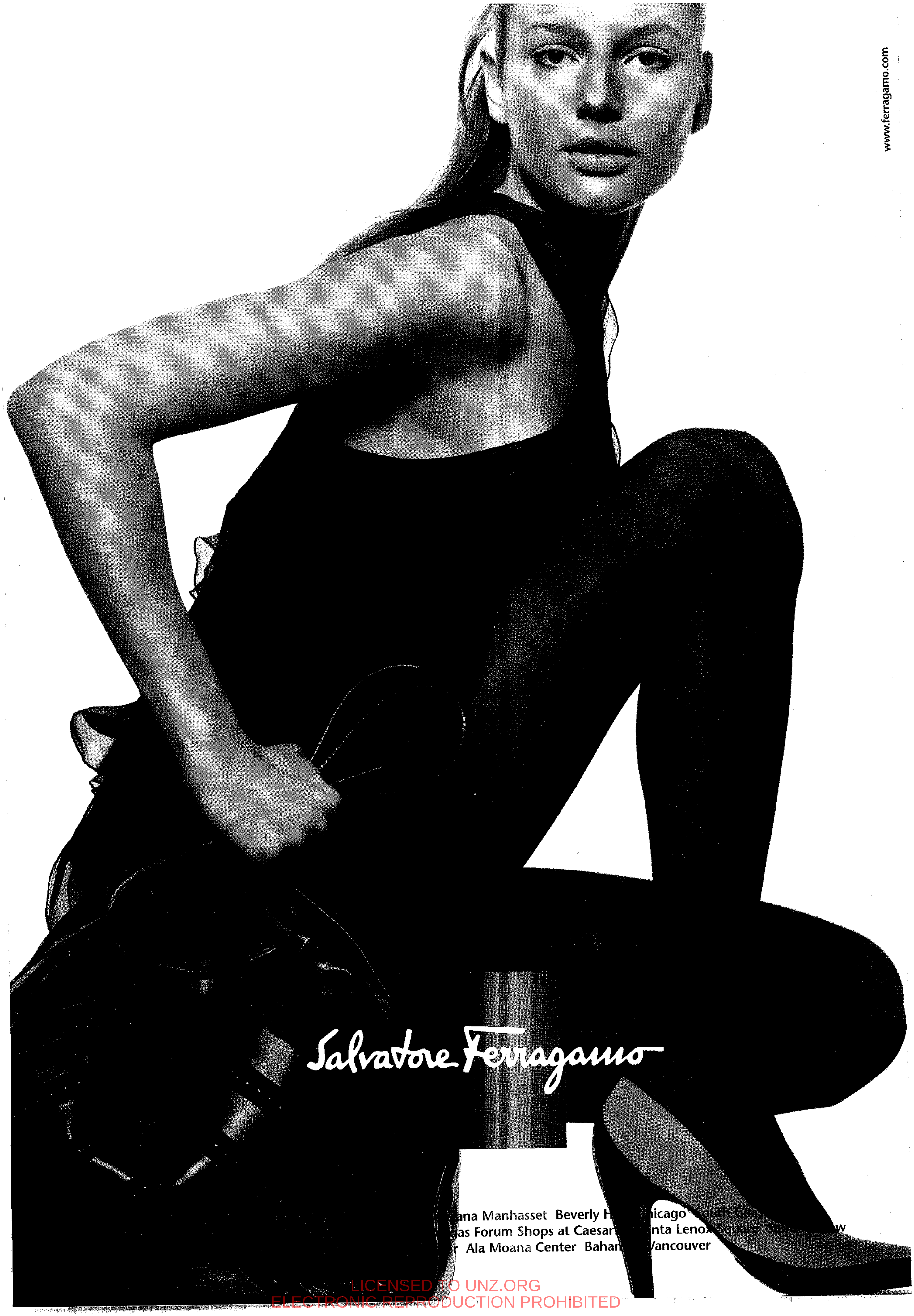
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